MESG

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Applying Office Lean Principles to Empower a Department's Performance on a Luxury Ecommerce Company

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Dissertação de Mestrado

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Resumo

A farfetch é uma empresa de comércio de luxo online que tem vindo a crescer exponêncialmente desde a sua criação em 2008. Este facto contribui para dificuldades que respeitam ao ajustamento que a nova dimensão exige em termos de operaçãos de back office.

O grande volume de trabalho que o sucesso da empresa trouxe para os departaments, assim como dores de crescimento que advêm da falta de procedimentos que acomodem a nova dimensão, contribuem para perdas de efficiência dos colaboradores.

Este projecto estuda, analisa e implementa soluções dentro do departamento de delivery, responsável por tratar das situações que envolvam transporte de encomendas e é por isso uma equipa crucial para a entrega de um serviço de qualidade ao cliente final.

Após um estudo minucioso dos métodos de trabalho da equipa, assim como dos seus processos, esta tese de mestrado explica tanto as oportunidades de melhoria encontradas nesse estudo, como as duas soluções escolhidas para aproveitar essas oportunidades e convertê-las em ganhos de performance. Estes ganhos advêm de medições quantitativas que reflectem os tempos de trabalho da equipa e também de medições qualitativas que medem a assetividade e consistência do trabalho do departamento.

Enquanto uma das soluções foca o melhoramento da comunicação e as suas práticas correctas, a outra baseia-me na reengenharia e standardização do processo de retorno a origem, uma tarefa que tem um grande impacto no trabalho da equipa e que afecta directamente a qualidade do serviço prestado.

Applying Office Lean Principles to Empower a Department's Performance on a Luxury Ecommerce Company

Abstract

Farfetch is a luxury e-commerce company that has seen its size grow exponentially since it's existence. This contributes for some difficulties to adjust to the new size demands in terms of back office operations.

The high volume of work that the success of the company brought to the departments inside farfetch, as well as growing pains that come from lack of procedures that accommodate its growth, contribute for lost of potencial efficency of the company's employeers.

This project studies, analyses and implements solutions insides the delivery team, a back office department that is responsible for dealing with transportation related issues, and so it's a crucial department to delivery the expected service quality to the end customer.

After a closer study to the teams working methods and processes, this master thesis explains both the improvement opportunities that were considered relevant in order to improve the delivery teams efficiency, and it proposes two solutions to use those opportunities and transform them into performance gains. These gains come from both quantitive measures that address the team's timing targets, but also some qualitative indicators, that will reflect the assertiveness and consistency of the team's work outcome.

While one solution focus on the communication improvement, targeting implementing best practices, and reduce work variability, the other one is based on reengineering and standardizing the return to origin process, a task that has a big impact on the team's performance, and that represents one crucial point in terms of delivering a quality service to the customer.

Agradecimentos

Para agradecer a todos os envolvidos neste tese de mestrado, seria necessário algo mais do que apenas uma página, e portanto isto é apenas uma pequena representação desses agradecimentos.

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List of Acronyms

AWB	Air Waybill
BO	Back Office
CS	Customer Service
FO	Front Office
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
OS	Order Support
PS	Partner Service
RTO	Return to Origin
SLA	Service Level Agreement

1 Introduction

Online commerce or E-Commerce has been growing exponentially over the years becoming a reality on peoples' lives. Luxury goods aren't an exception, and Farfetch is a company that has grown considerably fast since its existence by offering an innovative service combining these two areas.

Luxury e-commerce is a market segment that has very specific characteristics that require the company to be capable to provide a premium quality service and transmit the trustworthiness needed to make customers buy high priced products online.

This project focuses on improving the performance of the Delivery department of Farfetch that is crucial on the operational side of the company because of its influence on the final outcome experience for customers.

1.1 Farfetch Portugal

Farfetch is an online fashion marketplace for luxury boutiques that want to expand their markets globally throughout the use of internet. The innovative concept to offer boutiques the possibility to go online by offering the necessary services to do so (customer service, online platform, transportation logistics among others) in exchange for a commission based approach, threw the company on an exponential yearly growth since it's foundation in 2008.

The value added for the end-user is the possibility to access small boutiques from all over the world, with a wide variety of rare and limited items without having to leave their houses. Following the company's motto, Farfetch is changing the way the world shops for fashion.

The company today ships to more than 190 countries from boutiques situated in 35 different countries generating revenues in 2015 corresponding to 500 million dollars.

1.2 Farfetch Structure

Farfetch's offices are spread all over the world with sections located in Portugal, UK, Russia, USA, Brazil China and Japan. These locations help the company to provide premium services all over the world and to act accordingly to specific markets' needs.

Farfetch's employees are divided into nine departments with different responsibilities:

Account Management→Responsible for maintaining the relationship with boutiques by giving support regarding strategy and planning related advises;
Black and White →Responsible for a project who's scope is to help brands who want to develop their own online store;
Customer Service (CS)→ Responsible for the day-today issues related to helping/supporting customers (includes Front Office that deals directly with the customer and Back Office that deals with back office operations);
Finance→Responsible for Finance/Accounting operations;
Human Resources→Responsible for employee/career management;
Merchandising→Pricing related activities;
Office Management→Responsible for office maintenance;
Operations →Responsible for operational activities. (includes Supply, Delivery, Order Support, Continuous Improvement, Payments and Delivery Development teams)

Partner Services/Brands (PS)→Responsible for the day-today issues related to boutiques/Brands;

Production→ Responsible for the development of content to include in the platforms.

Technology→ Responsible for the development and maintenance of the platforms as well as the back office applications and IT.

1.3 Farfetch's Business Model Canvas

To better illustrate its business concept it is presented the business model canvas for the company:

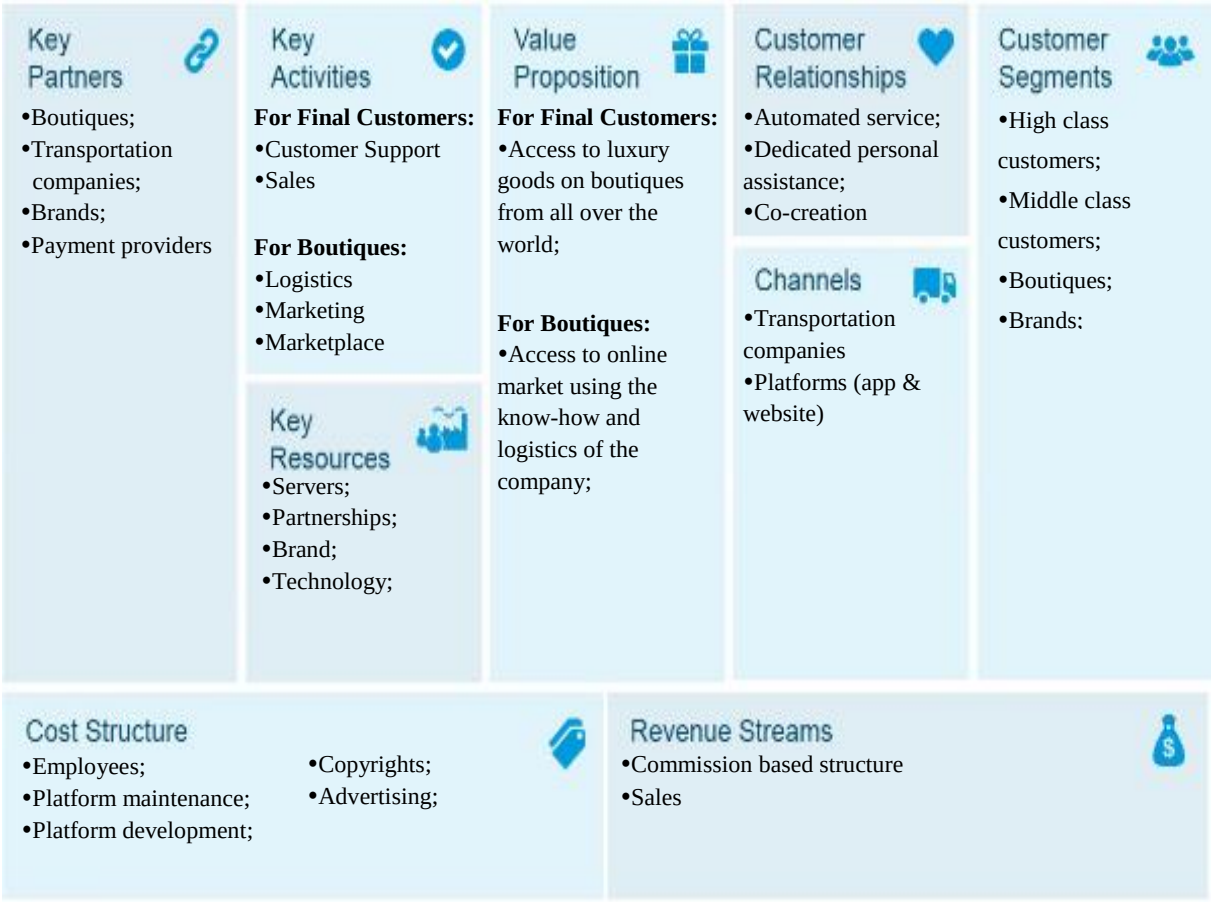


Figure 1 – Farfetch's Business Model Canvas

Farfetch is a technological fashion oriented company. It's a marketplace that offers boutiques from all over the world services (logistics and marketing) that allow them the chance of expanding their business throughout the world using internet. For customers,Farfetch is a portal of access to luxury brands and a wide variety of unique items that are rare to find. It's the ultimate luxury fashion experience as it allows customers to access prestigious boutiques without the need to travel to their location.

The company's main assets are its relationships with boutiques and brands, thatallow the buildup of the online marketplace, its technology (including platforms and infrastructures) and the brand itself that represents luxury and premium service. All of the technology is developed inside Farfetch's offices to allow a bigger control of the services provided. This includes both the platforms as well as the back office applications.

Customers can reach Farfetch throughout the website or through its dedicated customer service. The segments of customers are the boutiques and brands (working as both partners and customers co-creating value with the company), high class people (being the main final customer) and middle class people who are fashion oriented.

The profits of the company are based on a commission structure for every order sold by the boutiques.

1.4 Delivery Team

This project will focus the improvement of the performance and quality of work of the delivery team, a section of the operations department.

The delivery team is responsible for all operational activities that involve transportation. Among others, the types of activities that the team is involved include: dealing with customs, transportation companies and exportation/importation documentation. More in-depth analyses of the team will be developed further on this master thesis.

1.5 Problem description

The scope of this project is to improve the performance and quality of the work of the Delivery team. The team's volume of work is very high as it will be shown further, and that volume of work alongside with gaps in the working methodology compromises the levels of desired service quality. Due to the nature of the team, being a central department on which other teams rely to solve their problems and also due to the exponential growth that the company has been observing, it is necessary a study on the working reality of the team with a continuous improvement mindset, to identify potential flaws on efficiency and find solutions for those flaws.

It is important to underline that being a premium service company whose customers have a great demand for quality, back office operations need to be qualified and fit to perfection in order to provide a service that beats customers' expectations. That being said, in an ecommerce company that ships orders from all over the world, it is unwise to think that it is possible to offer a premium quality service without guaranteeing that same quality on the transportation of those orders. Demanding customers will require orders to reach them on time with no possible delays, also for them to arrive with no signs of damages, and to have as least work as possible to have the package delivered to their houses.

This specific market segment will subsequently require high levels of performance in terms of back office so that the levels of complaints that reach customer service are as least as possible. The company's personality comes from the reputation that it has next to its customers. For that, continuous improvement plays an important role in order to help departments to improve their work's outcome. Focusing this point, the project will apply continuous improvement methodology to the Delivery team in order to obtain more satisfying levels of service for both quality and quantitative measurements. The final goal is to help the team to execute their daily tasks with better consistency, assertiveness and timings by improving and focusing their work on value adding activities and reducing the ones that are not necessary.

1.6 Methodology

As it was mentioned, this project targets the performance and working methods of the Delivery team by applying a continuous improvement mindset in order to study, understand and solve the improvement opportunities that were found in the team.

To engage the solutions for this project, a diagnose was made inside the team's daily work, in order to understand the workflow, the procedures and the tasks as well as where the roots of the problems where. This study was made by observing the team's work as well as by inquiring the agents about their work, their difficulties and what they think should be changed. These conclusions were then crossed with data relative to the team's performance in order to obtain valid and crucial results about the potential improvement opportunities.

From this diagnose it was concluded that two projects where going to be developed in order to address the improvement opportunities and help the delivery team with their performance gap. First a communication project that seeks improving the communication procedures inside the team. Second the standardization and reengineering of the return to origin (RTO) process, a complex and problematic task that will be explained further on this master thesis.

For both these projects it is presented a closer view of the executed diagnose to understand their relevance, followed by a presentation and justification of the chosen solutions to address this projects. While the communication project involved the team and followed a project timeline that is explain with its different phases, the RTO process project is presented with a division of its two types of interventions: reengineering and standardization.

Finally the final results obtained as well as future work to be developed related to this matter are presented and analyzed.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Luxury Ecommerce

The word luxury originated from the Latin word, Luxus that means soft or extravagant living, indulgence sumptuousness (Roux and Floch, 1996). This points us already to a very specific type of market that will naturally have implications on the reality of the agents involved. Picking up on Coco Chanel's definition of luxury "the necessity where necessity ends" we can clearly identify that we are dealing with a speciffic surrounding where the traditional market approaches need to be adapted in order to fit the luxury world. But it is also important to understand that luxury is a subjective concept built by the perspectives of customers and personal and interpersonal motives (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). Luxury consumers are looking to differentiate themselves from the rest of society to become part of a higher social class (Stegemann, 2006).

"The Entire world of electronically based organizational activities that supports firm's market exchanges—including a firm's entire information system's infrastructure" this is how London and Traver (2003) define e-commerce, essentially meaning that it's nothing less than the digitalization of the world of commerce throughout the use of information technologies. That being said it is not hard to conclude that the same way internet has been growing exponentially in terms of size and importance, e-commerce is following its big sister on its growth and becoming more and more of a reality on companies' and peoples' day-to-day existence. In fact, technological progress enables almost any business to buy, sell and cooperate globally, forcing any company that wants to compete worldwide to adopt this growing trend (Savrul, Incekara and Sener, 2014).

So how do these two concepts operate together, and what is the reality that exists on the world of luxury e-commerce?

Despite an international situation of economic and financial crisis, the online sales of luxury products have exhibited a growing trend in recent years (Guercini and Runfola, 2015). That can be justified by the fact that luxury products suffer less in crisis environments. Also, e-commerce as a whole has been and will continue to increase drastically as described before. This tendency could be further understood by acknowledging that e-commerce presents great opportunities of growth in the purchases of luxury products by consumers in emerging and developing markets (Chen and Zhang, 2011; Jung, Lee, Kim, and Yang, 2014).

However, like any other type of business, luxury e-commerce is also facing problems. Not only associated to its own reality, but also to the growth that the sector has been observing. In fact, growth in the luxury sector, specifically via e-commerce, imposes challenges to companies due to the risk of losing the aura of exclusivity among other features associated to their value proposition (Kapferer, 2014). Furthermore, as stated by Okonkwo (2009), it is challenging for firms to communicate and represent the luxury brand experience, and the sensory attributes of the products through virtual experiences. Whereas in brick and mortar stores, where companies can use physical elements to make customers perceive the brands' reputation as being part of the luxury sector, once a company enters the e-commerce sector, it loses the power to utilize those elements to empower its branding status. In order to overcome this limitation, e-commerce luxury companies should focus on being foolproof when it comes to transmitting the legitimacy and quality of their services. Luxury brands should ensure there is sufficient information on the company, products, terms and conditions, privacy and contact

details, and that its objective is clearly written to put the consumer's mind at ease (Wu, Chen and Chaney, 2013). The same authors have also stated, although customers usually are unaware of details, if you pay attention to them while developing and updating your website, that will ensure your credibility next to them.

Another crucial point for e-commerce luxury companies to secure their branding perception is through a well made design of their outbound logistics. This consisting of the delivery process of the end product to the customer. In order to create this, companies should pay attention to processes that guarantee the right product, right amount, right size, the condition of the delivery, and lead-time to the customer. Having all of these concepts finalized correctly to assure they are as close to perfection as possible in order to make the customer's trust owned by the company.

"Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection we can catch excellence." – Vince Lombardi

To sum up, in order to guarantee customer trust in a luxury e-commerce environment, companies need to observe all possible details as they lose the power to marketing their status throughout their physical existence as a market place. For that, a continuous improvement and critical position needs to be adopted by the employees to obtain the best outcome possible in terms of customer experience and service providing. This is important to understand the methodology used in this thesis, that seeks to increase the service quality of the back-office operations to deliver a premium quality service.

2.2 Office Lean

A methodology that has been used for a long time to achieve efficiency, reduce waste and focus on value adding work is Lean thinking. Quoting from Kagioglou and Sapountzis (2007), Lean thinking begins with driving out waste so that all work adds value and serves the customer's needs. Identifying value-added and non-value-added steps in every process is the beginning of the journey towards lean operations that were born in Japan, more specifically in the automobile industry. Given its effectiveness, it spread all over the world reaching every type of manufacturing industry and its benefits where acknowledged in such a way that in order to obtain those same benefits, it has more recently been adopted by office-based functional areas, such as research and development and customer service (Chen and Cox, 2012).

As mentioned, Lean thinking's main focus is the reduction of waste, in order to focus on the value adding processes. The idea being to take as much advantages as possible from them and eliminate the ones that are time consuming and add little to no value. To do this, companies need to identify their main waste sources to then evaluate and reengineer their processes in obtaining a more efficient workflow. According to Ohno (1978), there are seven types of waste in manufacturing: transportation, inventory, waiting, defects, over-processing, excessive motion, and over-production. While talking about office lean, to identify these different types of waste is considerably more challenging as we are dealing with a much more volatile environment. Processes are much less standardized and much more humanized, and the concepts of inventory, production and defect aren't easily defined. In fact, taking an example given by Chen and Cox (2012), in an office environment, most of the tasks are translated via email or fax, causing more variation in time consumption, and correct arrival and departure times are difficult to determine. Also supporting this point, Bowen and

Youngdahl (1998), add that while mass manufacturing operates from a technocratic perspective focused on goals and tools, office based activities focus more on personal attendance of others. This makes office tasks' upgrades dependent on the improvement of skills and attitude of service performers.

The challenge of applying this vision into an office and service reality is to pick up its subjective environment and be able to extract concrete information about its processes, in order to understand where improvements can be achieved.

Many authors support that the causes of variability and inconsistency behind the work performed in the offices of a company come from the company's own reality. Picking up from Locher (2008), many companies have a functional structure designed in such a limitative way that it causes employees to have a very light relationship with the information they produce/process. This makes it hard for people to have a focused mindset on continuous improvement of the overall processes that guarantee efficient results for the company. Instead of having people responsible for specific functions only, lean thinking suggests they should work more towards a cross-functional approach, opening new possibilities for maintaining the quality of the information flow.

This brings us to the importance of work standardization. In order for employees to work towards a process optimization perspective, it is mandatory for them to be trained in the same way to obtain the desirable output. Standardized work is a foundation of lean thinking. Therefore, an initial focus of a lean effort is to implement true standard work practices throughout a business process, (Locher, 2007). Whether it's to train new employees, or to make sure that the existing ones work within the best practices, both process mapping and reengineering are fundamental areas for a company seeking to introduce the practices of lean inside its offices. These tools are going to be crucial to standardize the working methods of people and they will contribute to the foundation of the company's continuous improvement mindset, (Locher 2008).

Kagliogou and Sapountzis (2007) state that in order for lean principles to succeed, leaders must first work to create an organizational culture that is receptive to lean thinking. Starting from the top and spreading the values through the company to create a culture of continuous improvement, leading to the process redesign to improve flow and reduce waste; always with the target set on developing the overall system.

For this project to be possible, it was guaranteed that the mindset lived inside the operations of Farfetch was open to adopt this procedures, and so process mapping is a vivid necessity that exists inside the minds of the employees, which makes it possible to apply office lean principles by having the help of the people inside the company.

2.3 Business Process Modeling and Reengineering

Business process modeling and reengineering is a methodology different than existing improvement schemes. These schemes generally fail to go beyond the functional boundaries which exist in organizations structured along traditional lines. In BPM, a business process is seen as a horizontal flow of activities while most organizations are formed into vertical functional groupings, sometimes being referred to in the literature as "functional silos" (Childe, Maull and Bennet, 1994). This type of approach will help companies to overcome some of the problems of implementing Lean in an Office that were stated before.

As quoted by Heinrich and Henneberger (2007), process models are widely used in practice. The analysis and the reorganization of processes are essential prerequisites to improve the efficiency of operational procedures. In fact, business process modeling has been propelled by the claims of these companies to have achieved up to 80 percent savings on time and costs by restructuring business processes and organizations (Tinnila, 1995). This then confirms even more the previously taken conclusions that in order to successfully adopt a mindset to drive a company through a continuous improvement path, one needs to understand, standardize, and reengineer the processes composing the reality of the workflow. According to Childe, Maull and Bennett (1993), The movement towards lean production cannot be made without understanding how processes operate. In the absence of such an understanding, no attempt can be made to identify added value.

Despite its high capacity to empower the efficiency of the work tasks inside the company, business process modeling sometimes can be overdetailed leading to confusing and misleading interpretations. One big challenge while working with this methodology relies on finding the correct balance of detail, in order to not produce complex and confusing maps, that might make them seen as a monopolized area by specialists. The goal when mapping and reengineering processes is in fact to serve as a communication and training tool for all people involved, (Becker, Rosemann and Uthmann, 2000). On the other hand, while mapping a process it is fundamental to remember that in order to obtain a well-designed and useful outcome, one must acknowledge the importance of criteria related to the organization itself, as well as economical, and aspects related to the overall IT infrastructure of the enterprise, (Aalst, Hofstede and Weske, 2003). Engineers need to understand that both complex and overly simple processes, lead to poor outcomes and to have negative implications.

To avoid such situations, it is essential to agree on the level of detail. Rosemann (2006 pitfalls B) purposes two different paths about this matter: either to focus on the 80 percent case, or stop modeling activities involving just a single organizational unit.

Another topic that is pointed out by many authors is the necessity to measure the performance of business processes, and to find correct ways to do it. After all, performance measures are the vital signs of the organization which quantify how well the organization achieves a specific goal (Seokjin and Behnam, 2008). So if we consider an organizational goal as being the efficiency of its processes, companies need to find a way to estimate that efficiency in order to understand how well their efforts are doing, as well as to define future work to address the lower points of that evaluation.

What is known is that if the problems associated with Business Process Mapping and Reengineering are overcame, and modelers find the correct methodology to apply this tool in their workplaces, it will provide companies with a powerful asset to guarantee the quality of their workflow, as well as drive employees to work within their best practices always having in mind the focus on value adding activities.

2.4 Monitoring and measuring processes performance throughout the use of Key Performance Indicators (KPI's)

Key performance indicators are a valuable tool for measuring the health of the companies' business, or a portion of it. Like Ganesan and Paturi (2009) have stated, KPI's are a quantitative, periodic measurement of one or more processes, chosen from all of the possible metrics within a business, in such a manner as gather the most amount of information in a single indicator ("key" indicator). Its usefulness comes from the important conclusions that can be taken from an individual quota.

KPI's conclusions can be addressed to evaluate past process performance, as well as to identify present issues and/or to set goals for future work. These conclusions are also important channels for companies to communicate strategy to everyone and to make them commit to it as well as to drive them to pursuit goals. In fact, measuring and monitoring strategy throughout competent performance indicators will result in process improvement and consequently to organizational effectiveness, (Ganesan and Paturi 2009).

In order for these indicators to be as useful as possible when being used to measure process performance, they should be thought through on the modeling/reengineering phase, so they can address the process reality, and work as a monitoring and evaluation tool at process execution time. This will also allow a more proactive reaction to events that might need intervention, (Wetzstein, Ma and Leymann, 2008). Without the incorporation of KPI's on process modeling, one cannot optimize the business processes intelligently nor its response to strategic events to create an eventual valid process reengineering, (Pan and Wei, 2012).

To conclude this section, it is presented that the KPI lifecycle defended by Ganesas and Paturi (2009), is comprised by four phases. First, identify what to measure that is relevant to the company and its processes. Secondly, define characteristics involving these measurements. Thirdly, associate the identified KPI's with the different processes and stakeholder that might be involved. The fourth and final phase, track and monitor the results for a period of time and if necessary, repeat the cycle in order to make adjustments that refine the outcome of the desired standards.

"Measurement is the first step that leads to control and eventually to improvement. If you can't measure something, you can't understand it. If you can't understand it, you can't control it. If you can't control it, you can't improve it."

- H. James Harrington

3 Delivery team

In this chapter it is presented the diagnose made inside the delivery team. The team's daily tasks are explained, as well as the pains that are behind the performance gap and the improvement opportunities that were found, having origins in those pains.

3.1 Overview

The delivery team works as a bridge between Farfetch and courier services. It is called to take action on issues that involve delivery services on a bilateral relationship where both other Farfetch's departments and transportation companies require the team's action when needed.

This relationship is presented on the following diagram:

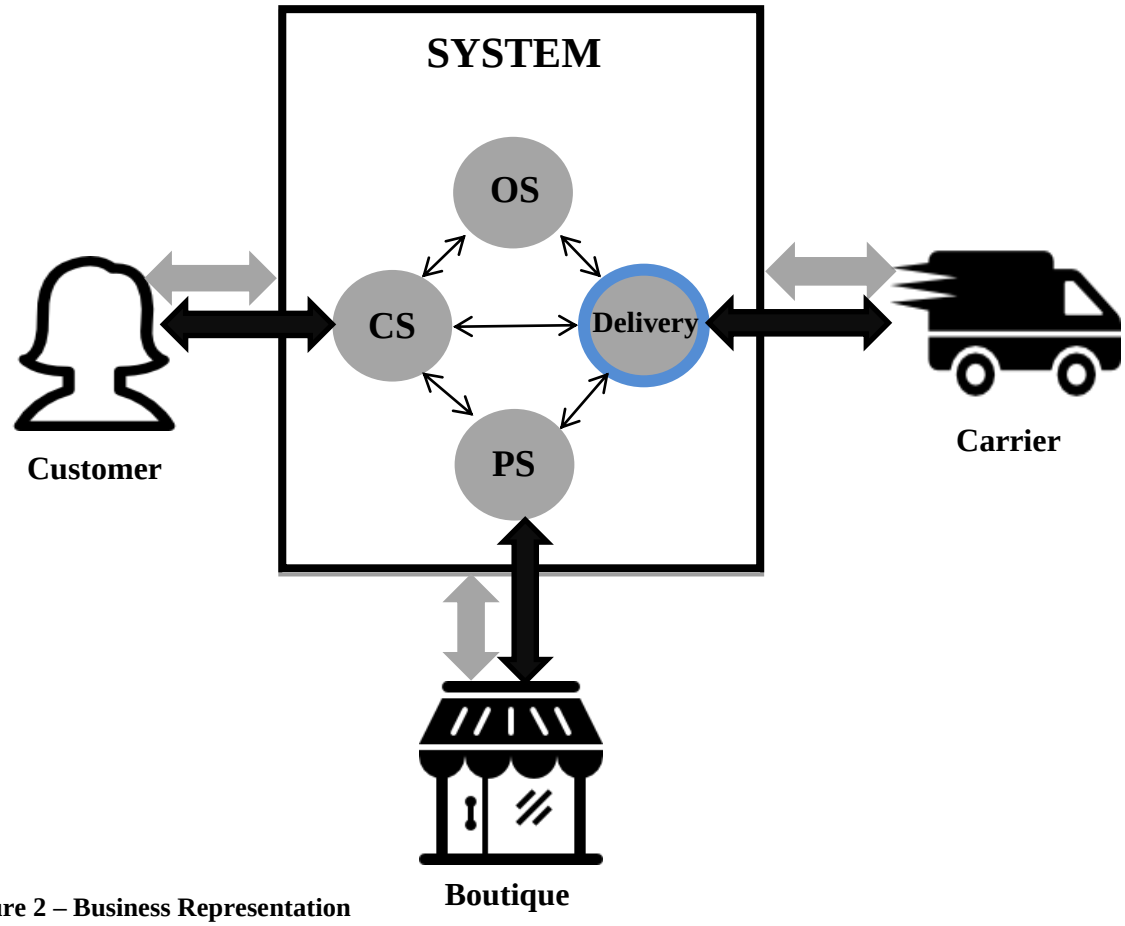


Figure 2 – Business Representation

Figure 2shows interactions between the outside stakeholders with the internal ones. While grey arrows represent interactions with the system (typical from normal procedures involving order processing) the black arrows represent situations where issues require internal departments to take action. While all internal departments communicate with each other, external stakeholders' communications are assigned to different departments: Customer contacts CS, Boutiques contact PS, and Courier services contact Delivery (highlighted in blue).

The Delivery team is therefore the bridge between Farfetch and transportation companies. Deeper analyses on the team's role are developed further on.

3.2 Structure

The team's structure is divided into three sections, spread throughout three cities (Porto, Los Angeles and Tokyo) in order to make its services available for all time zones. This is necessary due to the fact that the team's responsibilities are non-stop, as delivery/transportation issues keep happening all over the world, and there's a need to have the department online in order to solve them.

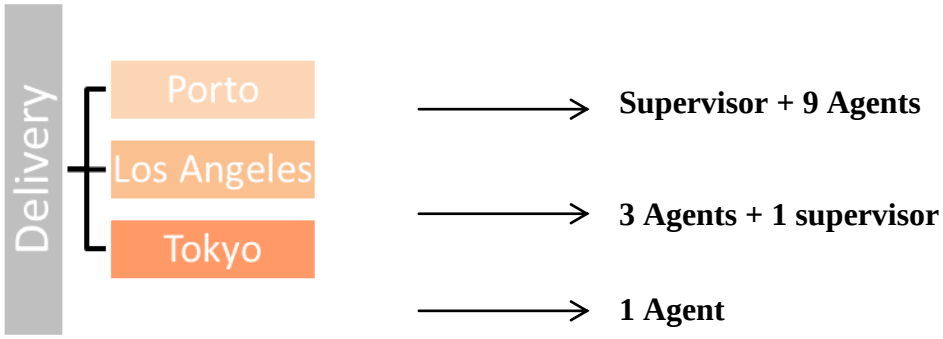


Figure 3 – Delivery team's structure

3.3 Core Activities

3.3.1 Order processing

As stated before, the team's responsibilities involve all the transportation/courier related issues. This includes a vast number of tasks and processes. The following scheme represents the order processing flow

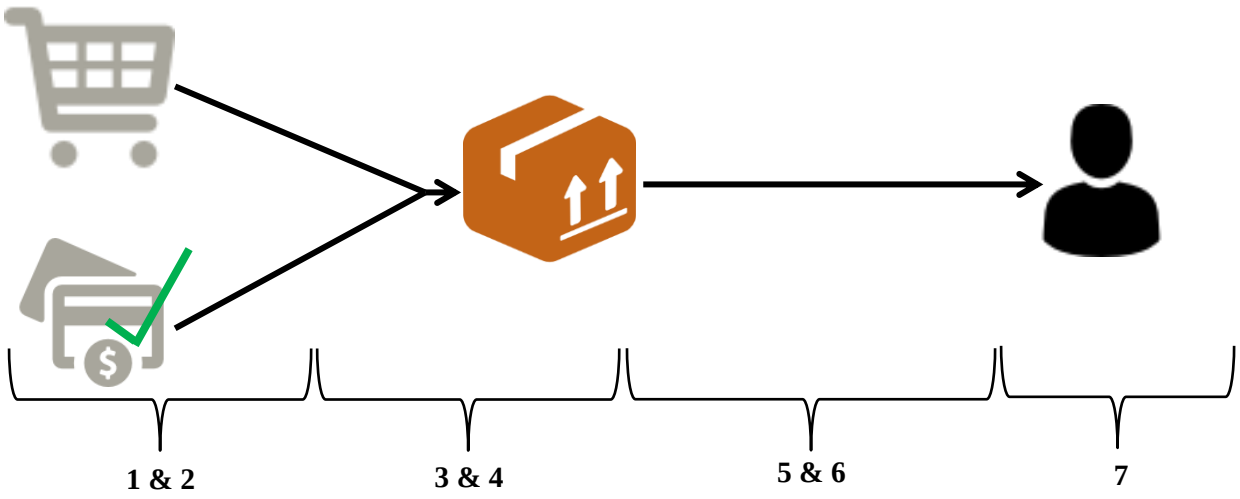


Figure 4 – Order Process

The following explanation of the order processing flow, will help to understand better the types of situations that represent the daily work of the team:

1.Check Stock→ the boutique checks the availability of the product once the order is placed.

2.Approve Payment→ Payment's legitimacy is analyzed, the order will only be accepted if the customer is concluded to be trustworthy; Delivery might be called to contact carriers in order to investigate a customer.

3.DecidePackaging→ the boutique decides the type of packaging according to the item(s) dimensions and prints the documentation related to customs that might be needed to include in the order.

4.CreateShippingLabel→ system automatically generates shipping documents. The order might get stuck in this step and Delivery needs to take action either to generate AWB's that due to some type of errors didn't get generated automatically or because order has some restrictions (import restrictions to some countries).

5.SendParcel→ the boutique prints the AWB, attaches it to the order, and the package is sent to customer's address. If the carrier's scanning misses, it's Delivery's duty to contact carrier to update the system.

6.Parcelintransit→the path of the order since it leaves the store until it reaches customer's hands. Delivery proactively checks tracking status and also responds to requests coming from other departments to act on certain issues (Customs Holding, Missing orders, RTO's, Redirections.)

7.OrderReceived→ Customer receives the order and this concludes the process, but if the customer isn't satisfied delivery might have to take action either to investigate eventual damaged during transit.

3.3.2 Return Process

The team also acts in the return process:

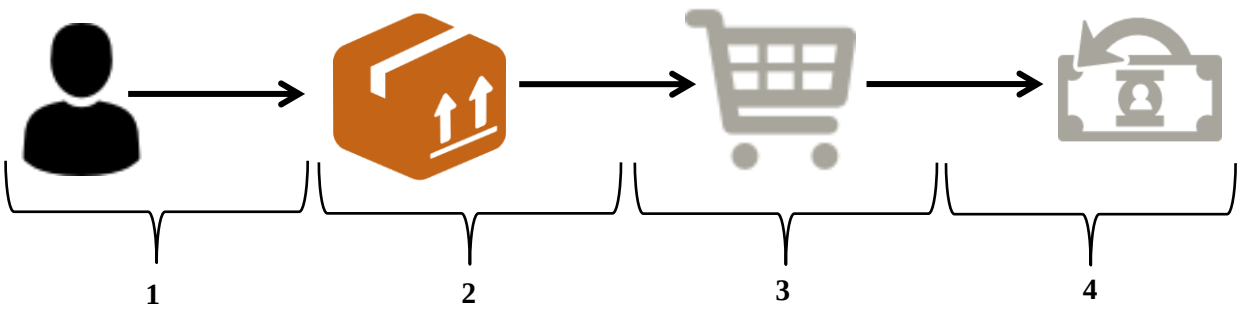


Figure 5 – Refund Process

1.Book Return→Customer creates and books return on the system.

2.Return in Transit→Return is in transit to boutique, Delivery might be call to act in the same modules as when the order is in transit.

3.Verify Return→ Boutique verifies return. If it's accepted customer gets refunded. If its rejected customer (for example package may arrived with damage, to the wrong boutiques or it was returned without using Farfetch's website to book and create the return resulting on unidentified returns and deliveries to boutiques involving charges)the delivery team is called to investigate the situation in order to evaluate if customer should be refunded or not.

4.Validate Refund→ According to the verification of the return, the customer's refund is accepted or not, Delivery team might help in this validation.

3.3.3 Slots

Slots are collections sent by boutiques to Farfetch's headquarters to be photographed in order to create content for the website. These slots are then sent back to the boutiques after photographed. These are packages that are transported with very tight timings, and that involve big values. The delivery team acts in order to created documentation that might be needed to include in the transportation of the slots, as well as in any issue that might happen during the transportation.

3.3.4 Other Activities

There are other processes that the team might have work related to. These processes include more specific situations, for example when a customer wants to send an item to repair, or when some countries need specific documentation to include with the order and the team proactively generates that documentation to send to the boutiques before the order gets sent.

3.4 Working methods

Communication is the center of all work done by the team. Being an issue solving department that deals with the interactions between Farfetch and carriers, communication has a determine role on the teams daily job.

Communication is made using Skype, when it involves informal nature, Outlook for general communications, and Zendesk for issue handling tasks, being the most important and used method of communication.

Zendesk is a ticketing tool that helps process requests from both external and internal agents. It is also the center tool of communication for other Farfetch departments that work within a ticket solving nature.

In the Delivery team, tickets enter and are categorized accordingly to the type of issues that they refer to, and wait in their respective pools for agents to pick them up and assign them to themselves. For internal tickets this categorization is made by the teams that send the tickets to the delivery team, for external communication this categorization is made by the agent who picks up the ticket first. Each Agent is assigned to a specific view that contains one or more categories in order to have a more organized work method.

Table 1 represents the views and categories for tickets that enter Delivery's account. The categorization of tickets will make them to be divided throughout the different views. This will help Agents to work in separate visions and have an organized workflow.

Table 1– Delivery team's zendesk views and categories

Zendesk's View	Categories	Sub Categories
RTO's	RTO's	Global
Address Changes/Redirections	Address Changes/Redirections	Global
Duties Being Charged	Delivery Issues	Duties Being Charged
Delivery/Customs/Claims	Delivery/Clearance issues ; Claims	China Customs; EEI; FDA; Fish and Wildlife; High Valued Items; Mexico Import License; Proof payment; Docs Missing; Jewelry; Homeware; Beauty Missing/Delayed scans; Customer unreachable; Wrong Address; Shipment refused; Duties being charged; Damaged/missing Items; Wrong Item; Claims
Returns via UK/Lost and Found	Returns Via UK Queries; Lost & Found Queries	Global
Pick-up issues	Pick-Up Issues Customer; Pick-up Issues Store; Exception	Global
Billing	Billing Queries	Global
Editorials/Pack/Slots /Supplies	Supplies requests; Pick-up requests	Global
Labels/JP post	Labels/Invoices	Global
Boutique set up	Account set up	Global

Zendesk's overview can be seen in the following two pictures. The first one represents the pool of tickets with the one of the views selected. The second represents the window for creating a new ticket.

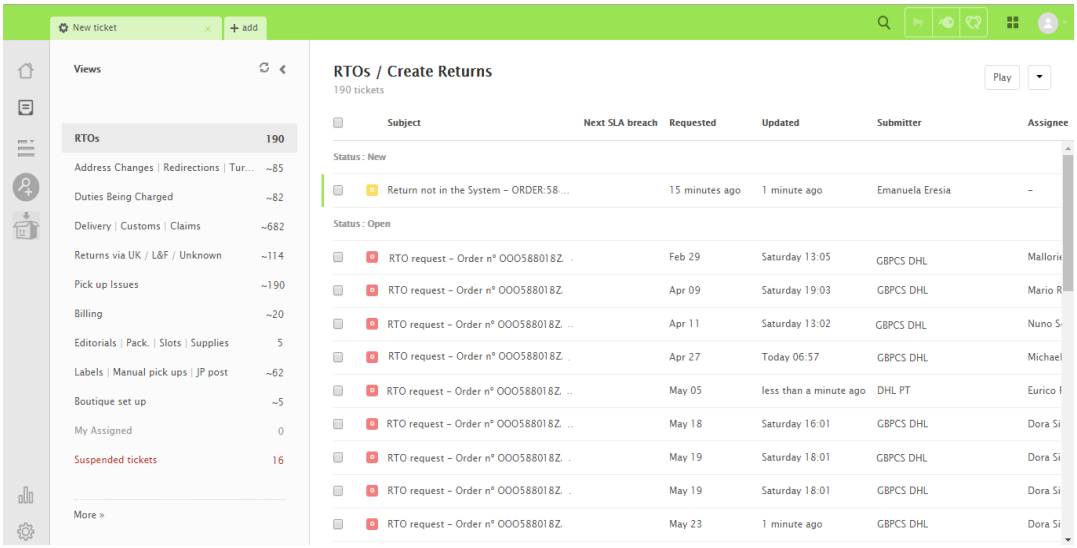


Figure 6 – Zendesk's Ticket Pool

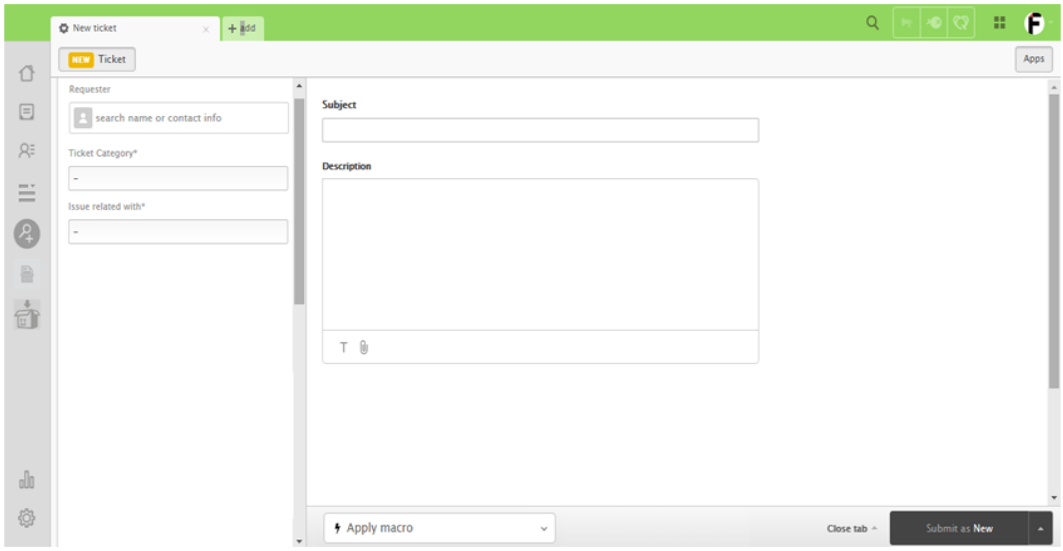
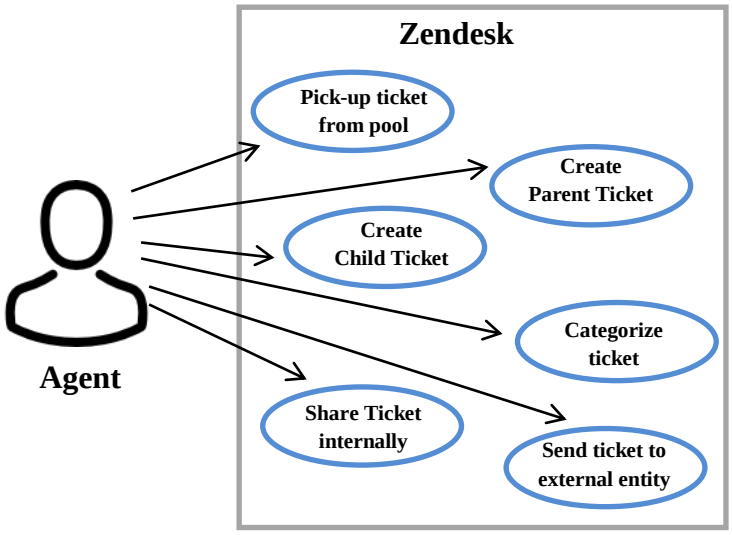


Figure7 –Zendesk's New Ticket Window

To represent the usability of Zendesk it's presented its use case:



Parent ticket →Ticket that first originated issue on the team's side.

Child Ticket → Ticket that is created based on a parent ticket.

Figure 8 – Zendesk's Use Case

An agent can pick up a ticket from the pool in order to assign the ticket to himself, create a new parent ticket to start a new issue to be solved, create a child ticket, to send a new ticket associated with a parent ticket, categorize the ticket according to the category it is related to, share a ticket with one or more internal departments, and send the ticket to an external entity.

Every time a ticket is picked up by an agent he/she becomes the assigned agent and every time an agent creates a new ticket he/she becomes the requester of the ticket.

Tickets are also qualified with different status: the "new" status represents a previously unassigned ticket waiting to be picked up, "open" means that the request has been assigned to an agent who is working to resolve it. "Pending" means that the assigned agent has a follow-up question for the requester. "On-hold" means that the support request is awaiting a resolution from a third party (an entity that doesn't have a Zendesk account) and solved means that the agent has resolved the support issue. Until a ticket is closed by the requester he/she can reopen the ticket. For example, the requester may not agree with the agent that the

support issue is resolved and reply back to the ticket solved email notification. Finally, closed means that the ticket is complete and can't be reopened.

3.5 Team's Pains

The teams' pains mostly come from two different events.

One is the dependency that other departments have in Delivery to solve a great number and variety of issues, resulting in the team not always being able to handle the big flux of tickets they are given, contributing for an undesirable level of backlog.

The second comes from the company's big growth in a short period of time. This made it hard to adjust the reality and the working methods to the new dimensions making problems like communication, lack of standardized processes and an absence of inter-departmental connection to appear. It also contributed to gaps in the team's performance, and specifically adding value to the backlog as well as compromising the quality and effectiveness of the team's work.

Picking-up from what was written in the literature review, on a luxury e-commerce business, service excellent is a crucial objective, and so if there are issues verified in a vital department for customer satisfaction such as Delivery, it requires special attention and actions taken as soon as possible.

This brings us to the relevance of this project, which is to go into deeper analyses of the presented problems, in order to understand the best ways to address them, and to find possible solutions that can help the Delivery team to achieve a better performance.

3.5.1 Tickets and backlog

To better understand the undesirable levels of backlog that the team faces it is presented a chart with the different ticket categories and their tickets waiting for resolution distributed by the time they're waiting in queue (values for April 31st).

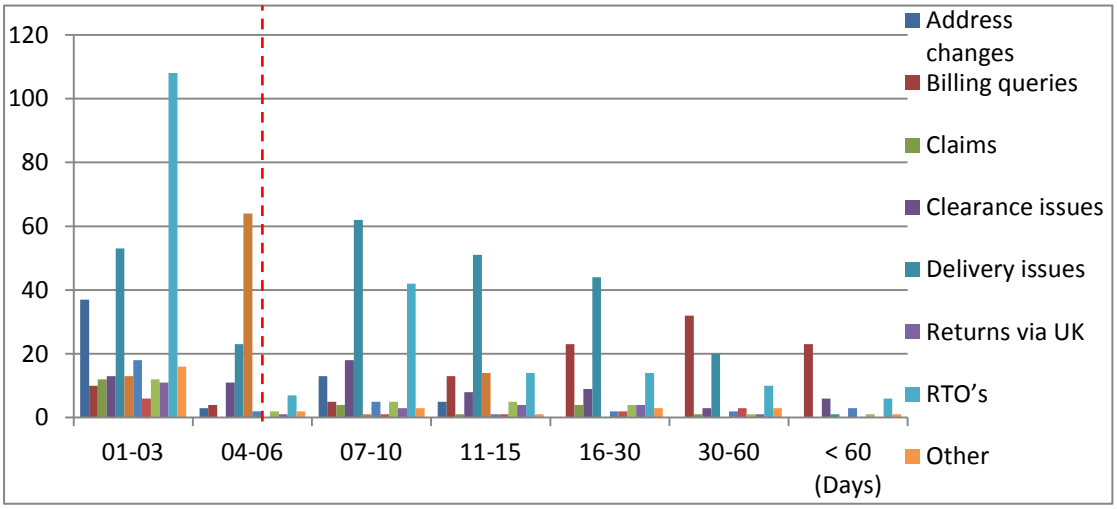


Figure 9 – Delivery Team's Backlog by Category on April 31st

On figure 9 it can be observed that there is a high volume of tickets waiting resolution, with some categories having more expressive values than others. Many of these values are not satisfying because for almost all categories, there are tickets with measures of full resolution time that will break the defined Service Level Agreements (SLA's) by a large amount.

The delivery team's SLA's currently are fixed:

- **Average Full time resolution (marked in red on the Chart)**should be not greater than five days (80%). This indicator represents the time since the ticket first enters the delivery team's Zendesk until its closed shouldn't surpass five days for 80% of the tickets.

- **Average first time reply** should be not greater than five hours (80%)→ This means that the time past between a ticket first entering the delivery team's Zendesk and its first answer shouldn't exceed 5 hours;

As for the first SLA it can be observed that many categories are contributing for its breach, having numerous tickets with 5 or more days of age waiting in queue, and a considerable amount of them with ages over 15 days and up to 60 days, being the more expressive ones Billing Queries, Clearance Issues, Delivery Issues and RTO's.

As for first time reply, it is easily concluded that with undesirable levels of backlog for pending tickets, this volume of workload will indeed affect the team's performance on this indicator, as it compromises the team's attention to new tickets entering the pools.

These numbers are , therefore, not satisfying and the team requires some level of intervention in order to lower this values to levels of backlog that fit more the SLA's in order to be able to improve the overall operations performance and, naturally, the customer satisfaction.

3.5.2 Growth consequences

As it was mentioned before, Farfetch was a company that verified considerable high levels of growth since its existence. This expansion on such a small period of time, made it hard for the company to adjust its reality in order to keep up with the verified growth. What once worked for a small startup company, it is now outdated or unfitted for today's dimensions.

Problems started appearing, two of the main ones being the lack of an optimized and appropriate communication and processes missing on standardization and therefore not delivering consistency on their outcome. While these types of problems weren't so visible on a smaller dimension, where people's proximity was a lot bigger, and where the job roles weren't as segmented, with today's departmental increase and division, these issues are part of the day-to-day working reality.

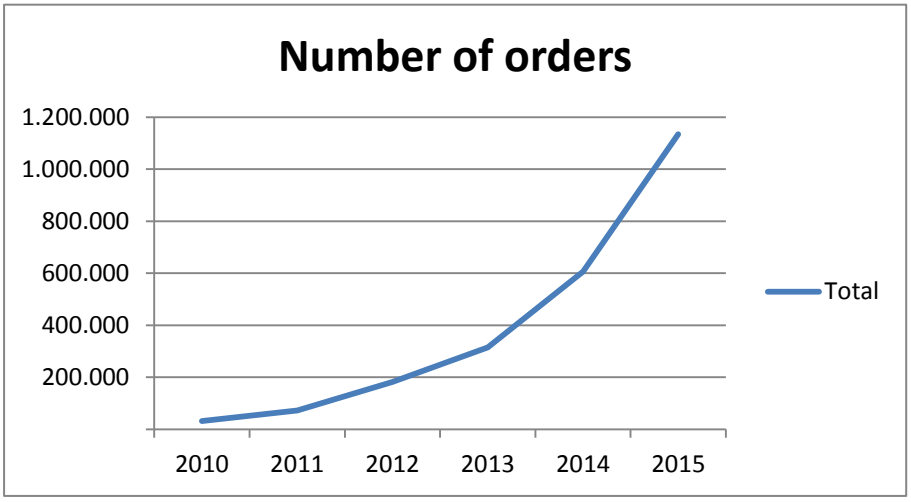


Figure 10 – Business Volume Growth

As it can be seen on the chart, the business volume grew exponentially and consequently the employee number rose as well on the course of the past 5 years, contributing for the growing pains that were described before. Specifically for the delivery team, an increasing number of orders (and obviously countries for which customers place the orders) results on a larger daily number of issues that many times, hiring new agents doesn't present itself as the only necessary modification. Also, being a department on which other departments depend largely upon, the growth on employees on other sections will contribute for an increase of workload for the team.

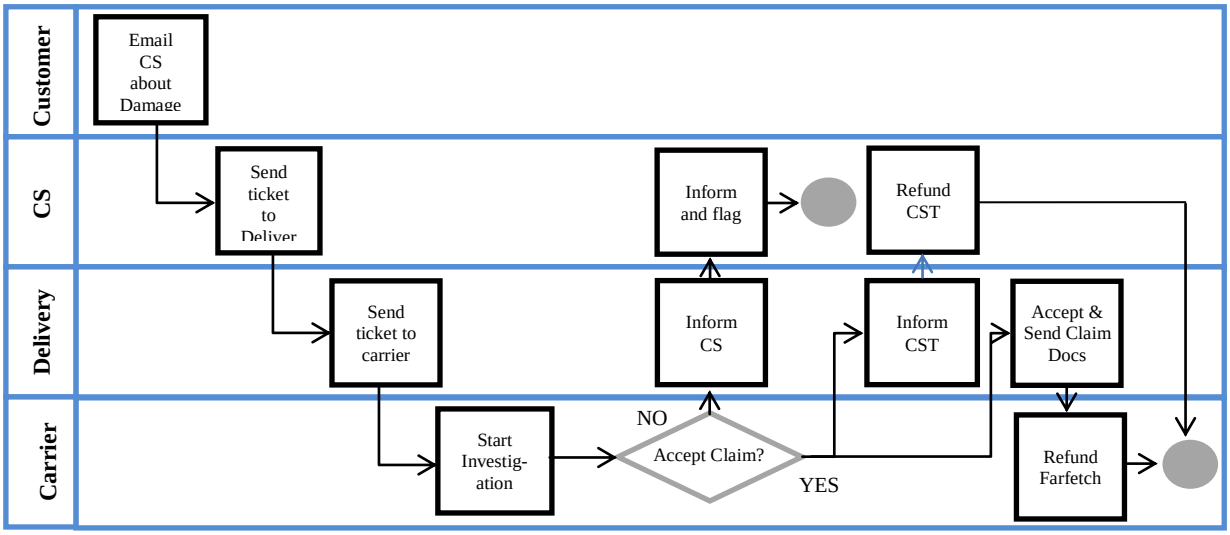
3.6 Improvement opportunities

To address the problems stated before, the team's working methods were closely observed. In this section it is presented the analyses done on those working methods that resulted on the identification of two improvement opportunities in which work will be develop and based upon, in order to improve the team's performance, as well as to guarantee better levels of consistency on their work's outcome

3.6.1 Communication Improvement

The first improvement opportunity is to implement a way to guarantee effective and efficient levels of internal communication, to achieve an improvement on the levels of backlog and subsequently on the some of the indicators that are behind the measurement of the team's performance.

To better understand the gap existing on this matter, it is presented a simplified version of the process "Damaged Parcel" in order to situate some of the flaws related to communication that were found.



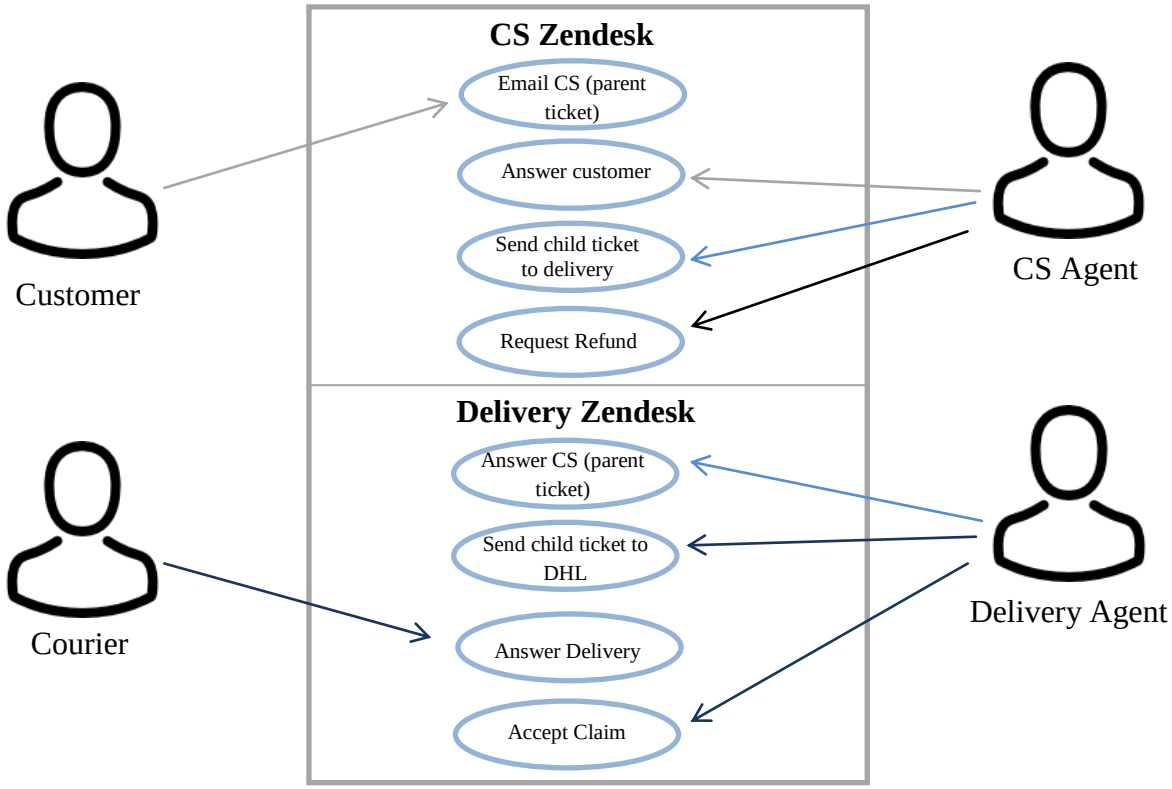
Picture 11 – Damaged Parcel Process Map

Looking at the damaged parcel process map (picture 11) , the customer sends his complaint to CS that will transmit the information to Delivery, and then this information will be sent to the carrier , that will start an investigation in order to accept or decline the claim based on the damage photos and description. The typical problems that might appear in this process in terms of communication include:

- **Sharing of extra content with teams**, (Example for picture 11: when sending the first message the carrier, include both the Delivery team's text plus the original message sent by CS, making it harder for the other side to be quick in understanding the problem);
- **Messages sent with incomplete information**, resulting in extra interactions that waste time (Example for picture 11, when sending the documentation to the carrier, some documents might be forgotten and carrier will have to request them again);
- **Internal notes submitted after ticket is solved**, reopening the ticket on the other teams side, (Example for picture 11: once carrier accepts the claim and refunds Farfetch, agents sometimes solve the ticket and write an internal note with the refund value, reopening the ticket on CS's side, contributing for extra added ticket resolution time);

Looking at picture 12 that represents the use case for the interactions involving Zendesk in this process, what wants to be achieved is that communications involving different agents (represented by different colors) are dealt with using different associated tickets (on a parent – child relation), to keep agents from sharing parallel conversations with each other. Additionally it is also important to guarantee that each communication has the necessary information to keep the interactions to a minimum and allowing faster answers. Even though those are the best practices that should be used by agents, that is not what happens as it was explained.

Further explanations and a complete development of these solutions will be explored in the next chapter.



Picture 12 – Damaged Parcel - Use Case Zendesk

3.6.2 Return to Origin - Process Standardization and Re-engineering

The second improvement opportunity consists on an attempt to standardize the workflow of the team, that as it was stated before, lacks of a generally accept methodology on many of its processes. Since it wouldn't be possible to address all processes during the time for which this project was developed, it was decided that the process that would be mapped, standardized and re-engineered would be the Return to origin process (RTO). The reason for this choice is that looking at the categories for which the team has a bigger amount of backlog, whereas Billing processes (where boutiques are billed for unknown invoices) depend a lot on external entities and so it's somewhat out of the company's control to improve and Clearance/Delivery issues are general categories that include a vast number of different processes (and sub-categories) as shown before, RTO is a category for which one single process is associated with, and it still ranks as one the categories with the biggest amount of backlog.

For that the process will be analyzed, alongside with some of its sub-processes, in order to understand the causes of the existing problems that make this process a center of attention when addressing the team's main concerns.

RTO – AS-IS

The process of RTO is a process where a department requests the return of package to its origin before it reaches its destination. This might happen because of fraud detection, wrong item's shipped, customer cancelling the order, among others.

From the Delivery team's point of view, the requester asks for the RTO and the team will then track the package to understand if the RTO is possible (the order might have already been delivered). If it's possible, carrier is asked for a RTO that will then try to recover the package on time. In this phase the carrier might require a document justifying the RTO reason (RTO letter).

If the package is not recovered, the RTO fails and Delivery will warn the requester that it wasn't possible to recover the package and then the department will act accordingly. If the carrier successfully recovers the package, then it gets sent to the origin, and the RTO AWB is sent to delivery, that will then inform the requester, create the return on the system and monitor the package until it reaches the origin (during transit extra documentation might be needed). Once package reaches destination, the ticket is solved. For better understanding see figure x.

Looking at the Order Support point of view, before submitting the request to Delivery, after a fraud suspect is detected, the team will check in which step the order is, and if it's before step 5, the boutique is warned, and the team cancels the order. If the package is in step 6, then the team asks Delivery to request a RTO. If the RTO is succeeded, the team receives the confirmation, requests refund to customer and creates return on the system.

Order Support is the department responsible for approving the orders submitted by customers after analyses on whether they are legit or not. The reason why the Order support perspective is presented is to show that the process of creating return on the system is thought by each team to be their responsibility, representing a problem that needs to be solved.

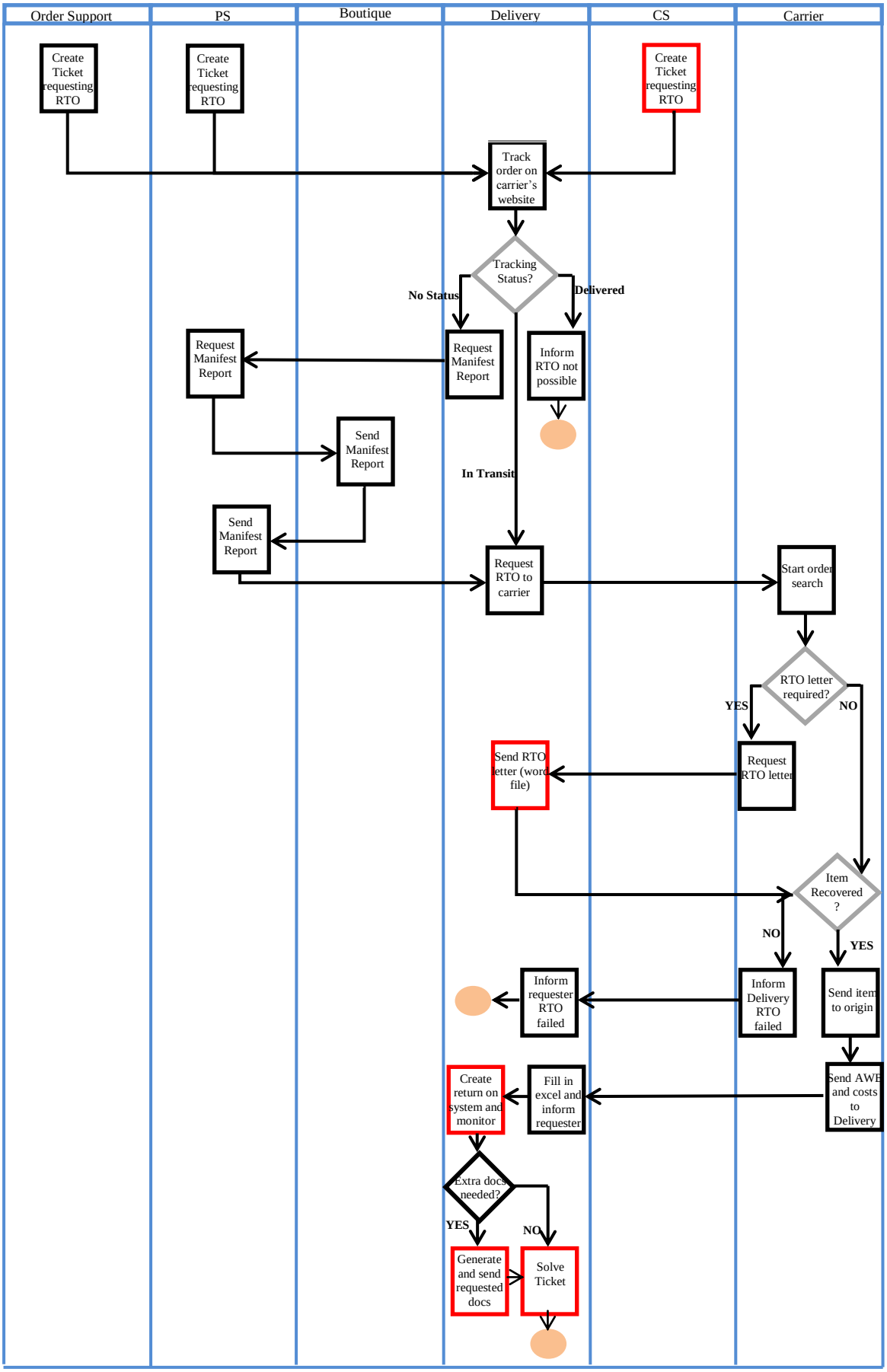


Figure 13 – RTO Process Map(Delivery Team Perspective)

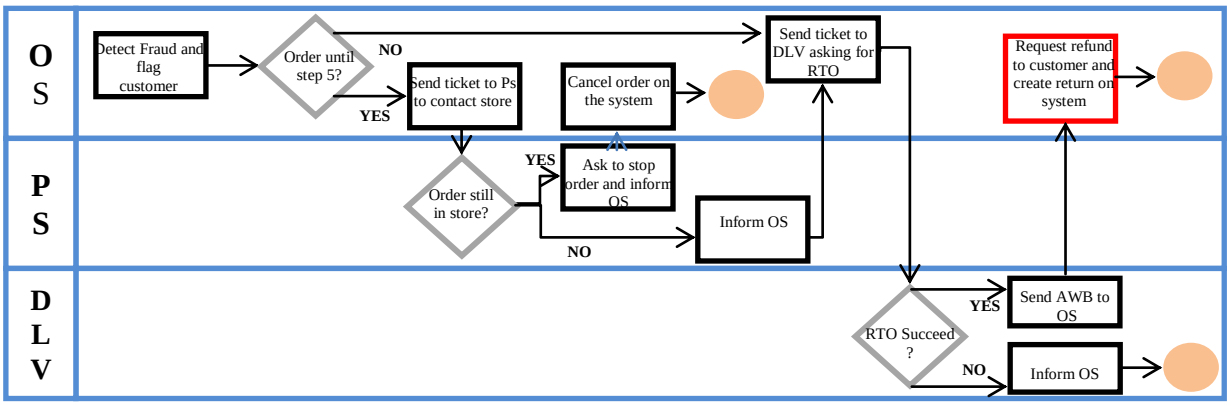


Figure 14 – RTO Process Map(Order Support Perspective)

Customer service as well as Partner service might also place RTO requests and both those teams are also not consistent to whom they ask for the return to be created. In fact, customer service has its Back Office section that has capability and responsibility of taking care of some problems related to delivery (RTO included) and this procedure isn't being adopted by customer service.

The identified problems (in red) are:

- The required documentation (RTO letter, LOA, Invoice) is not standardized, and different versions are spread throughout the agents, many times not being the correct ones causing agents to lose time;
- While monitoring the RTO, the ticket stays open contributing for unnecessary backlog as many times it does not need extra documentation and so the Delivery team's action ends when RTO is confirmed;
- CS Back Office is capable of performing the RTO requests that come from CS, but many of those requests still are made to the Delivery team.
- The process to create the return on the system is not correctly defined, making teams to be creating it without knowing if the other team has already done it. Both teams receive requests to do it causing confusion, and wasting time;
- The process to create the return is also ambiguous in terms of the system design and needs to be improved;

What will be implemented is a proposal of improvement to the process that will solve the stated problems throughout the appliance of modifications including: standardization of some tasks and documentation, elimination of unnecessary steps and changing some responsibilities. Further developments of this matter will be developed on chapter 4.

4 Solutions

In this section there are presented the solutions chosen to solve the problems identified on chapter 3. The goal is to use the studied improvement opportunities to introduce value adding modifications to the team's working method, in order to fill in the gaps created by the pains found inside the delivery team.

4.1 Communication Improvement

As identified in chapter 3, internal communication is a matter in need of attention in the company as a whole, and therefore in the delivery department. What is explored in this section is a way of guaranteeing that the information flow is optimized, and that the identified flaws regarding communication are overcome, with the purpose of improving the team's performance, both in qualitative and quantitative parameters. This gains an even bigger importance when we're talking about a working unit that comprises people from different countries from different time zones and some differences regarding their working methods.

Like it was shown on a typical and simple process that represents one of many that the team deals with on a daily basis (figure 11), there are some flaws in terms of communication that this project seeks to reduce and possibly eliminate.

A lack of efficient communications costs organizations, representing a net drain on time, money and effectiveness. Gaps in internal communications also cause companies to miss opportunities and to disconnect messages to stakeholders and audiences.

4.1.1 Scope

The need for this project comes from the whole purpose of this master's thesis that is improving the overall performance of the team. By targeting the problems existing in the team's communication environment what is desired is to obtain an optimum level of efficiency, and to reduce wasteful forms of communication that happen in the company.

Taking from the conclusions of the literature review, a luxury market environment deals with demand for perfection, and so seeking flawless procedures is a goal that should be buit-in the employees' motto. This should reflect a search for office lean that seeks optimization and reduce of waste.

As it was stated before, after analyzing the processes and the working methods of the team, communication issues were found that were compromising the team's performance given space for improvements to be developed.

To solve these problems, this project involved a research onsite in order to propose a communication solution applied to Zendesk that would optimize the team's workflow, as well as facilitated their work, and the work of teams that work alongside with Delivery. This improvement will be later analyzed. The KPI's chosen to evaluate the success of this project were:

- **Average full resolution time→** average time spent since a ticket enters the pool for the first time until it's closed;
- **Average handling time→** average time that a delivery agent is with the ticket opened;

- **Average number of reopens→** average number of times a ticket that was solved was reopened;
- **Average interactions' number→** average number of times a ticket switches from a team to another;

While the first two KPI's try to measure the agent's performance, the last two intend to measure the quality of the ticket (complete information and assertiveness). Naturally there are relationships between the KPIs. If any of them is improved, there will be repercussions extensive to the others.

4.1.2 Action Plan

To illustrate the timeline that this project was based on, it is presented an action plan that reflects both the phases and their goals according to the project's needs:

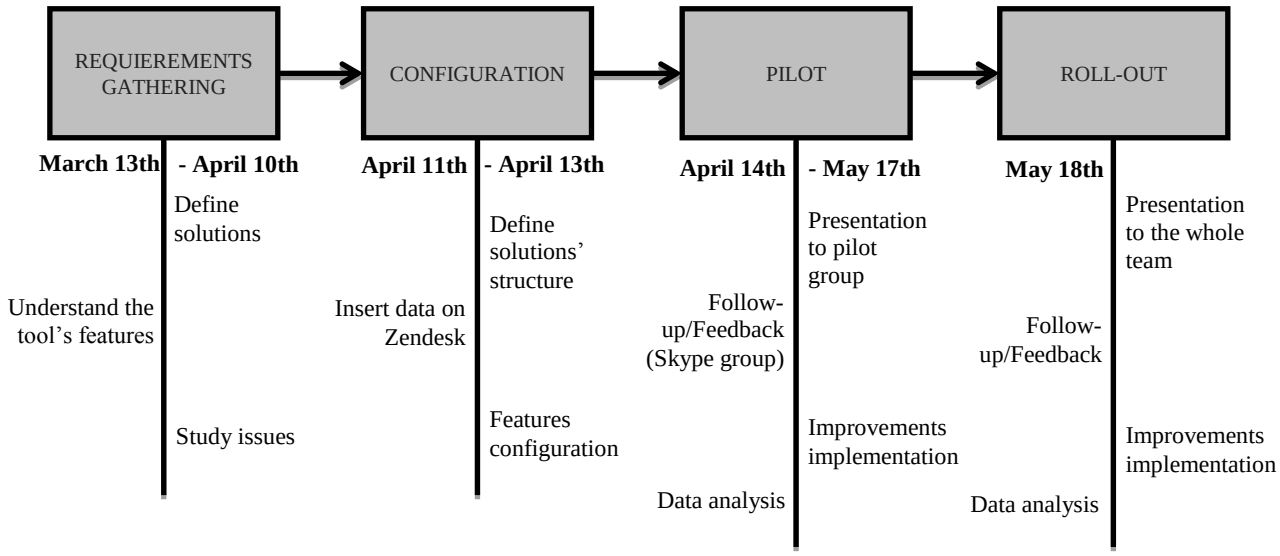


Figure 15 –Communication's project action plan

As it can be seen on figure 15, the communication improvement project was divided into 4 main phases. The first refers to requirements gathering where the main issues where studied, and the first solutions where define and developed. Secondly, the configuration of the solutions was made. This includes structuring the solutions and configuring Zendesk to accommodate them. Thirdly the pilot took place, the pilot agents were selected and their work was followed proactively to improve the project and gather feedback. The pilot was analyzed so that finally the roll out to the whole team was possible with the gathered improvements. In this final phase the work was also observed in order to gather final improvements to finally evaluate the project's results.

4.1.3 Requirements gathering

Part of this section was already developed on chapter 3, when the problems where observed and identified, and the conclusions where three main problems:

- **Sharing of extra content with teams and/or multi-sharing;**

- **Messages sent with incomplete information**;
- **Internal notes submitted after ticket is solved causing reopening;**

After close analyses to these problems, three solutions were found to help solve the issues stated before.

Table 2 – Communication's Problem-Solution

Problem	Solution
Extra content sharing and multi-sharing	Ticket Sharing Guidelines
Incomplete information	Macros
Internal notes reopening tickets	"My note" field

Ticket Sharing Guidelines

First, to fight unnecessary content sharing, the use of child tickets to communicate with different teams needs to be assured, as shown on use case represented on figure 8**.**The following picture represents the guidelines for ticket creations that assure that parallel conversations are not shared and that different conversations involving different teams and treated separately:

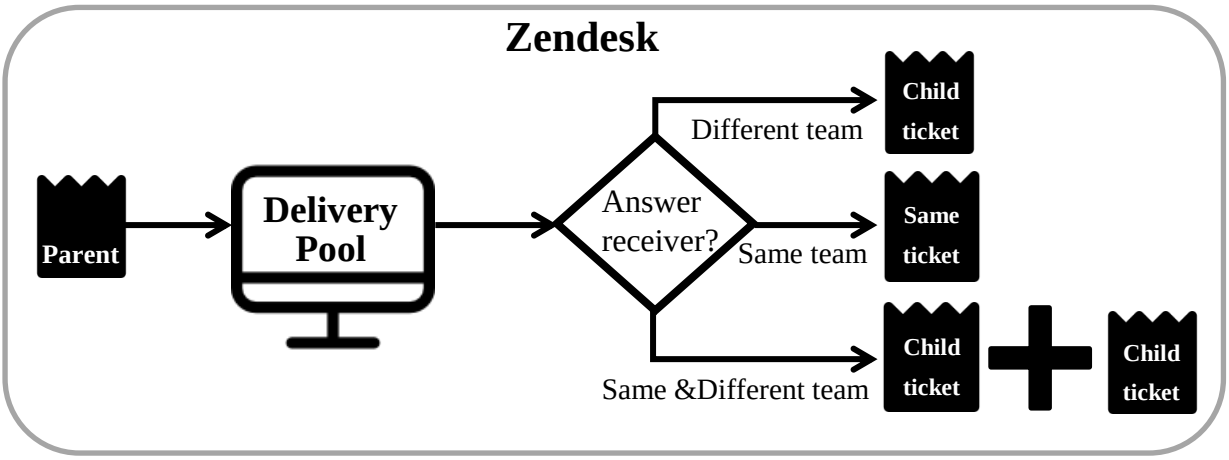


Figure 16 – Ticket Handling Guideline.

What this picture pretends to show is the flow of how tickets should be dealt with. If a ticket enters the team's Zendesk, this could initiate three situations:

- The ticket involves answering the same team that originally contacted Delivery, and for that the answer should be written in the same ticket;
- The ticket involves sending a ticket to a different team that originally contact Delivery, and for that a child ticket should be created;
- The ticket involves both answering the team that originally made the contact plus the sending another ticket for other department, and for this case the teams should answer the original ticket, and create a child ticket for the other department;

Another case is if Delivery makes the original contact, and in that case if it involves sending a ticket to two or more teams, then different tickets should be used. These guidelines will solve the issues related to the first problem, and will make the sharing of information more optimized, so that communication assertiveness can be achieved.

Macros

The second problem is related to information sharing being many times incomplete, causing tickets to have more interactions than they need, and incrementing time measures to performance indicators.

The solution chosen to address this problem is a feature that Zendesk has, called macros. Macros are standardized texts that are selected while writing the ticket, that according to the issue will write the subject, body of the message and some fields, as well as select the receiver and the category, leaving the agent to only have to write some information that varies from every ticket.

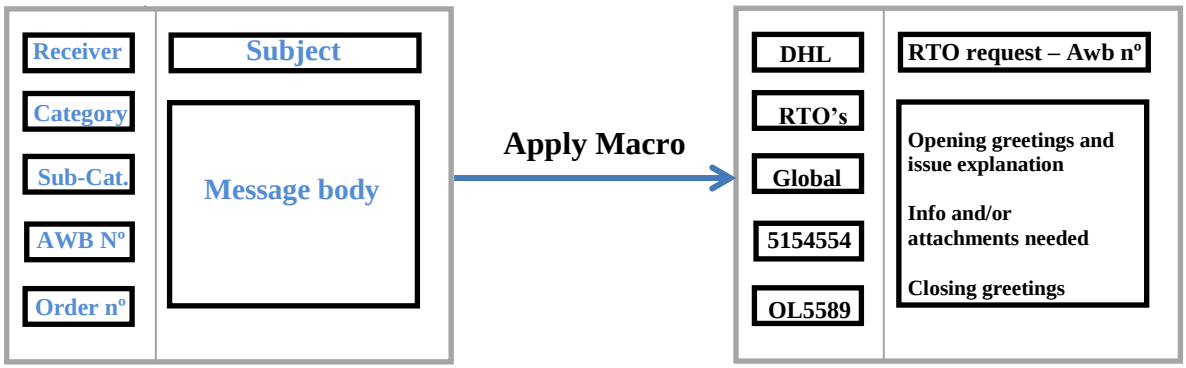


Figure 17 – Applying a macro on a ticket

Figure 17 represents what the appliance of a macro to a ticket should allow. After selecting and applying the macro according to the issue, the ticket's subject and message is automatically written, and the left side of the form is filled with the information needed.

For this solution to be possible, a careful study involving both the Zendesk's features and the team's categories was made, in order to first, understand how the ticketing tool's features could guarantee these functions and second, to understand which issues of each category can be standardized to be shaped into a macro.

For the first point, after understanding the tool's features, the ones that allow the desired features were:

Macro tool → allows applying the macros to the ticket. Even though this feature was already available on Zendesk it was currently not being used by the delivery team;

Auto-Categorize →allows macros to automatically categorize the tickets according to pre-definition;

Select Receiver → allows macros to select receiver according to pre-definition;

Placeholder→ it allows to automatically fill in the needed fields by retrieving data either from the parent ticket or from the custom fields the left side form. Most of the tickets that the Delivery Team deals with involve order number and AWB nº, if the team is creating a new parent ticket, the agent should fill in the form's customs fields added to the left side with these numbers, and the macro will fill in the message body, whereas if it's a new child ticket, the macro will retrieve these number automatically from the parent ticket, and fill in all spaces that contain this info.

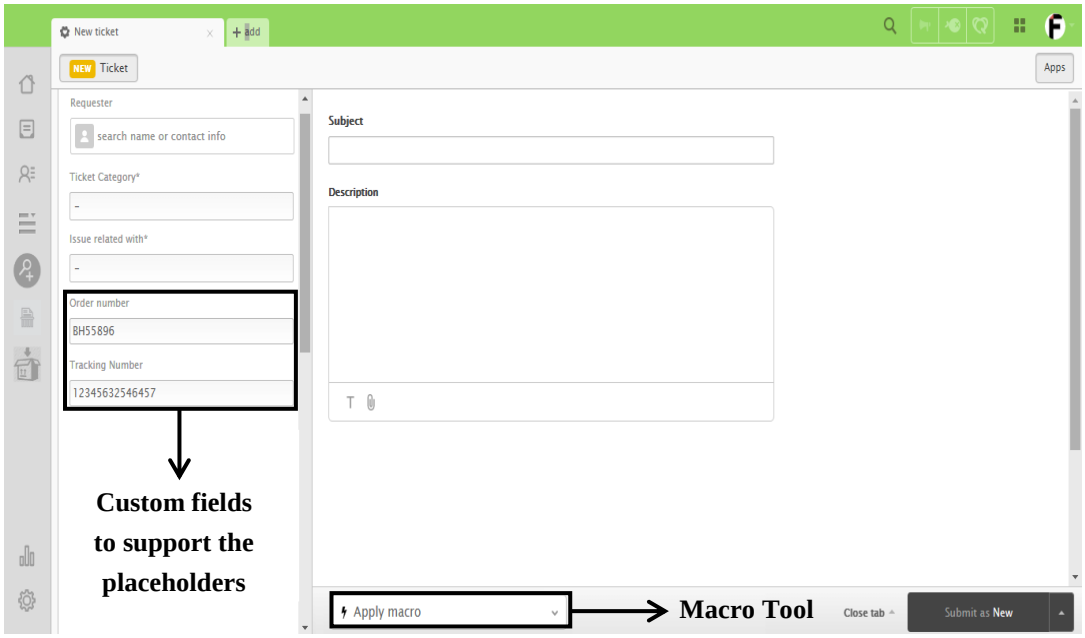


Figure 18 – Zendesk's New Ticket Window (updated)

Figure 18 is a screen shot of the new solution to apply the macros. Two of the features from Zendesk that were applied are signed on the picture, the other features are built-in the macro itself.

Once the program was ready to accommodate the solution regarding its features, the next step involved studying the issues dealt by the team. This means studying the different categories presented on table 1 and understanding the communications and tickets that are behind those categories in order identified which macros could be extracted from those tickets.

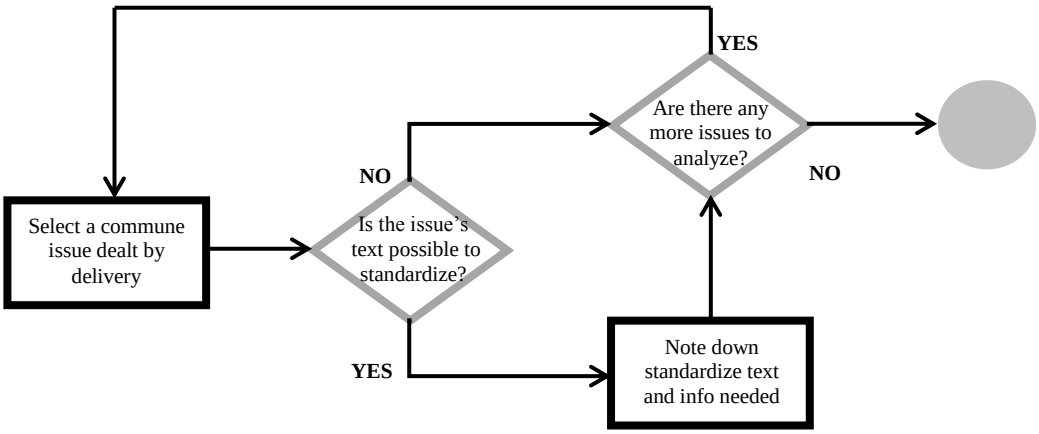


Figure 19 – Identifying Macros Process

Figure 19 represents the process followed to study and identify the possible macros. What was done was a study of every issue of each category dealt by Delivery, to understand if it is possible to standardize the message sent by the team in order to create a macro. If the message is possible to be standardized, than the message was noted down, alongside with the needed information, including identification numbers (order number and AWB number), needed attachments, to whom is the message sent and the logical subject.

The final result was a list with all of this information for the noted macros, in order to be possible to configure the software with the complete data that can be seen on Appendix A.

My note

Finally, to solve the reopening of tickets on other team's caused by the submission of internal notes, it was added a field to the left side form called "My Note". This allows agents to submit a note visible only for the submitting team, which will not cause the ticket to open after inserting it and therefore will stop incrementing unnecessary time measurements to ticket performance.

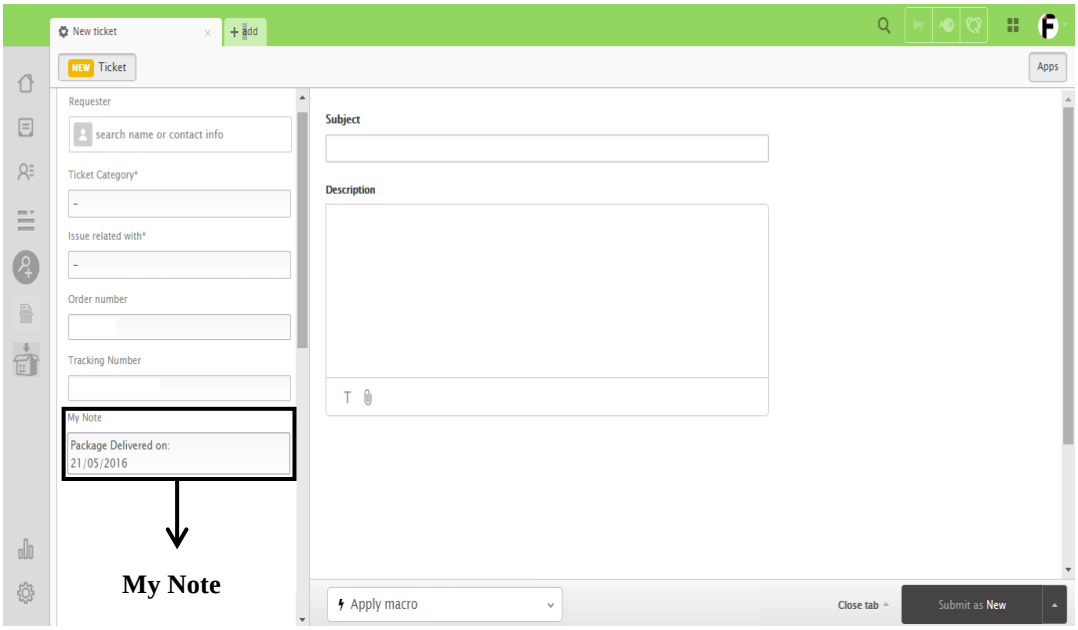


Figure 20 – Zendesk's New Ticket Window (final version)

4.1.4 Configuration

This stage refers to the macro configuration in Zendesk. While the other two solutions involve easy configurations already done in the tool, configuring macros involves picking up all collected data regarding them and introduce it in Zendesk. This involves inserting every macro one by one in the tool according to the individual specifications (information needed, categorization, etc).

Every macro that was obtained throughout the process represented in figure 19 was introduced in Zendesk with the information mentioned before, and the structure defined for the macros was to divide them by the destination of the ticket as it is shown on figure 21:

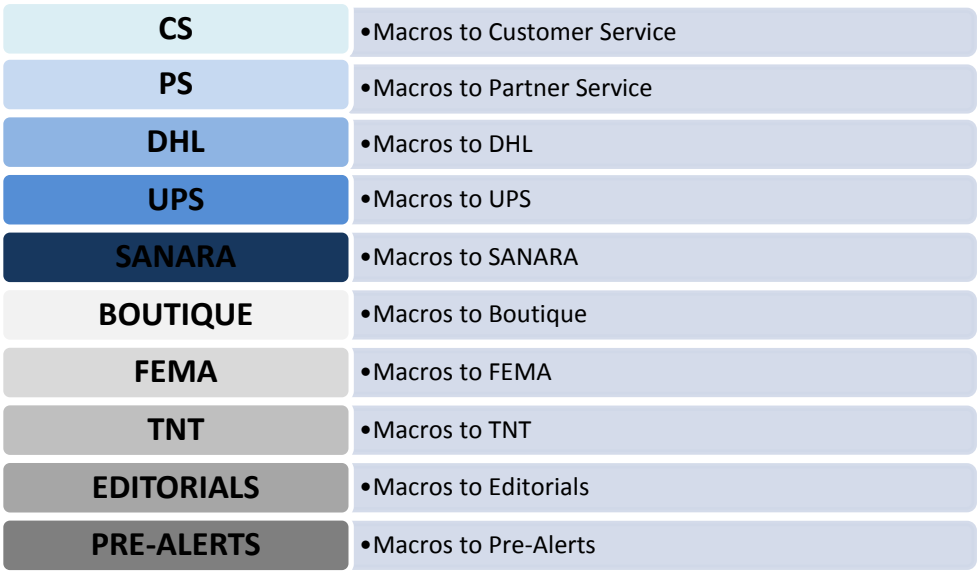


Figure 21 – Macros' structure

Finally, to retrieve the information from the custom fields, the placeholders that were used were the following:

Order Number →{{ticket.ticket_field_24191375}}

AWB Number → {{ticket.ticket_field_24150609}}

These placeholders are small bits of code that retrieve information based on constraints and that are written in the places that this information should appear while configuring the macros. They will retrieve the information from the custom fields on the left side form (for parent tickets) or from the subject of a received message (for child tickets), and fill that information on the places that it's supposed to appear, making the agent to save time by not having to insert it.

The full list of added macros and what they are used for can be found in Appendix A.

4.1.5 Pilot

The Pilot was a crucial stage of this project. In order to guarantee its success, the idea that this initiative would facilitate the agent's work and save their time needed to be perceived by everyone in the team. Simply improving the team's performance wouldn't be enough of a message to make sure that the project would be adopted by the team, there's the need of an extra incentive. For that, the idea of the pilot is not just for testing the project before the roll out for the whole team, but also to engage agents on the idea that their opinion matters, and so it was used to collect valued feedback. The agents are going to be the end users of the communication project and so to fit and shape it to their needs is crucial, not only for a better general success, but also to communicate the idea of their enrolment on its definition.

Seven agents were selected to participate on the pilot for the duration of a month, five from Portugal and two from the US. A presentation was made with all the concepts and updates that were involved on the development of the project, as well as with the purpose of the transmitting the idea that this trial period would be used to collect information and feedback to improve it.

Table 3 – Communication Porject – Pilot's Results

KPI	Before Pilot	With Pilot	Variation
Average full resolution time (days)	5,0	3,7	**-25,4%**
Average handling time (min)	12,6	5,8	**-53,7%**
Average number of reopens	0,24	0,07	**-69,3%**
Average number of comments	4,0	3,3	**-18,1%**

The results involving the pilot where considerably satisfactory as it can be seen on table 3, and the tickets efficiency was improved as times got cut off, and it's quality/effectiveness was also improved, proven by the indicators average number of reopens and average number of comments.

Other satisfactory result was the number of macros added with the pilot, that can be seen during the pilot, that allowed the collection of 28 new ones. All the suggestions given were valid and were later included in Zendesk before the roll out was made to the whole team.

4.1.6 Roll-out

After the project's success was proven by the pilot analyses, and after configuring the suggestions and improvements that were collected from the feedback, the roll out for the team was made. This involved presenting the project to the teams in Portugal, USA and Tokyo requiring two separate presentations due to the different time zones.

To keep proactively identifying possible improvements, data was analyzed regarding the tickets for which no macro was used, and for those tickets the possibility of standardization was studied. Also, to keep retrieving feedback, it was shared an online worksheet where agents could submit their suggestions. The final results that were obtained with this project can be found on chapter 5.

4.2 RTO - Process Standardization and Re-engineering

As it was stated before, it's important to look into the RTO process in order to solve the problems associated with it as it is the single process that contributes in a larger scale to the Delivery team's backlog. But that's not the only reason for that importance.

The RTO process has implications that stretch to other teams and even to customers. If we look into unsuccessful RTO's, they will result in fraudulent orders reaching the hands of the people responsible for the fraud, implicating charge backs to the company, and in wrong item's sent by stores reaching customers' houses implicating dissatisfaction and complains. It is therefore crucial to take a closer look to the problems identified on this process, and take action to solve them and improve its success. The problems mentioned on chapter 3 were:

- Ticket stays open longer than necessary;
- Lack of standardization in necessary documentation;
- Incorrectly defined roles regarding creating manual return on the system;
- CS Back Office should be in charge of RTO's that are requested by CS Front Office;

This solution will require actions of two types: reengineering and standardizing.

4.2.1 Reengineering

Ticket Solving

The action of solving the ticket should be done when the confirmation of the RTO is received from the carrier instead of when the package arrives to the origin. The monitoring of the package should be done with the ticket already solved, because most of the time no other interventions are needed, and it is only incrementing time to performance measurement indicators.

Instead, what was implemented was that the agent should solve the ticket when he gets the confirmation of the RTO, and then fill in an excel file with information about it (reason, date, order, carrier and tracking number) and then there will be an agent responsible for monitoring the file and archiving the delivered RTOs. Only if extra action is needed should the agent create another ticket to solve the situation.

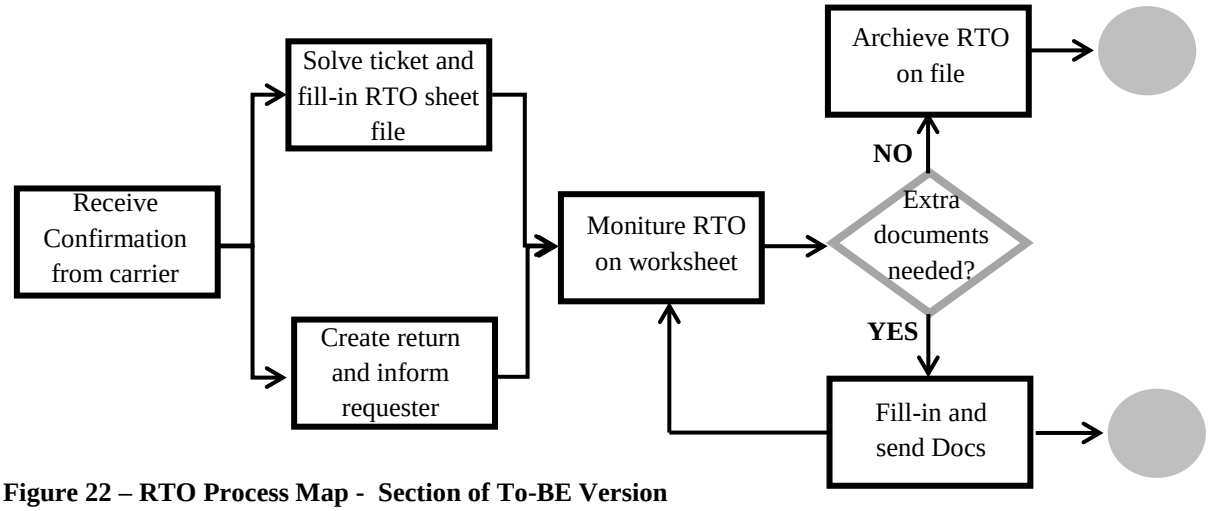


Figure 22 – RTO Process Map - Section of To-BE Version

Figure 22 represents the section of the TO-BE version that refers to the actions that the agent should do after receiving the RTO confirmation. Instead of monitoring the RTO and then solving the ticket, the agent should solve the ticket as soon as he/she has the confirmation from the carrier. Monitoring the process should be done with the ticket solved, and using the worksheet where the RTOs' data is inserted. This worksheet was also reformulated in order to make it more organized so it can be used as a useful tool to manage the process. Before it had unnecessary information (example: RTOs already delivered to origin) and was missing other information. It allows now to insert the reason behind the RTO and it allows archiving the

orders that already were delivered to the origin. The ticket should stay solved unless the package requires any type of action like documentation to clear customs or if it gets lost.

Requests coming from CS

Another reengineering action that was done was to completely stop RTO requests coming from CS to the Delivery, and instead redirect them to CS Back office.

Cs Back office is a section from the customer service department that deals with simple yet important issues that have origin on the customers' side. Since some RTO's come from customer requests, it makes sense that these the standardized new version of the RTO was presented to CS Back office to train them in the matter, and the agents from Front Office were told to ask all RTO's requested by customer to Back Office. Only in cases that more complicated actions are needed should the ticket be escalated to Delivery (for example if the RTO gets lost). This guarantees that the simple RTO processes requested by customers are taken cared by a department who's closer to the requester and has competences to deal with it in the right way, alleviating the workload of Delivery.

Creating a return

Finally, the other re-engineering initiative was related to the sub-process of creating manual returns on the system. As it was shown before, there wasn't an agreement on which team should create it, and both teams were doing it. The logical procedure in terms of process was to allocate the task to the Delivery team (and CS BO when RTO comes from customer), as it keeps the team from involving Order Support on the process when it's not needed. The team who is in charge of requesting the RTO to the carrier is the same who is responsible for creating the manual return on the system.

This process also needs standardization in terms of system interaction, but this point will be developed further on the next section as it has other implications with different teams and with the system.

4.2.2 Standardization

Process standardization is crucial in order to deliver consistent and quality outcomes. Seeking to improve a process's performance and solving its issues will always involve some level of standardization. For the RTO process there are two things that lack standardization, documentation that might be sent to carriers and the procedure to create a manual return in the system.

Documentation

The documentation standardization is a simple yet crucial thing. What was happening was that the templates used for documents (Letter for Cost Reallocation, RTO Letter) were different from agent to agent, and some of the agents had outdated versions on their computers that were no longer accepted by the carriers. Another inefficient point was the fact that these files were placed on the agents' computers and not available on the tool. This caused unnecessary waste of time and ticket interactions.

To solve this, there were created templates using the Excel format that were also updated to Zendesk to be available for downloading to every agent. This not only guarantees consistency on the documentation sent, preventing it from being rejected, but it also saves agents' time as the templates are now a form to fill in with drop down menus instead of a word document and it's available directly on the tool.

Creating Manual Returns

Creating a manual return is a procedure that takes place when an item is returned. Normally it's performed by customers who for some reason want to return the item, and do it on the system in order to book a collection and send it back to the store. There are three situations though, where there's the need for agent's intervention: when a customer requests for help, when a RTO takes place or when a customer returns a package by its own means (not using the system).

For the first situation, CS Front Office is in charge of helping the customer and creating the return on the system. When it involves RTO's, depending on the reason, it might be done either by Delivery or by CS Back Office (as it was stipulated after the RTO re-engineering). In situations involving wrongly returned items, the department in charge of this task is Delivery.To better illustrate this, it is presented a decision tree for creating manual returns.

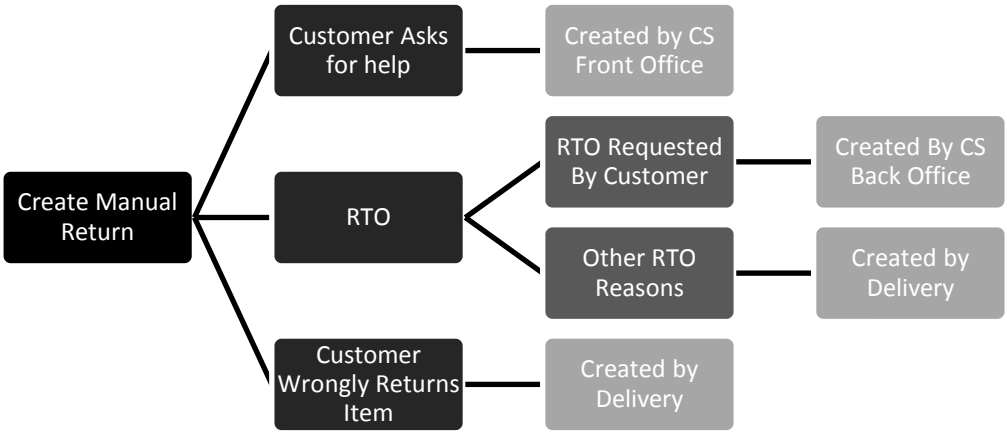


Figure 23 – Creating a Return - Decision Tree

This process lacks of standardization. The system has two ways of creating a manual return and both of them are ambiguous. To better understand this, it is presented a flowchart of this action.

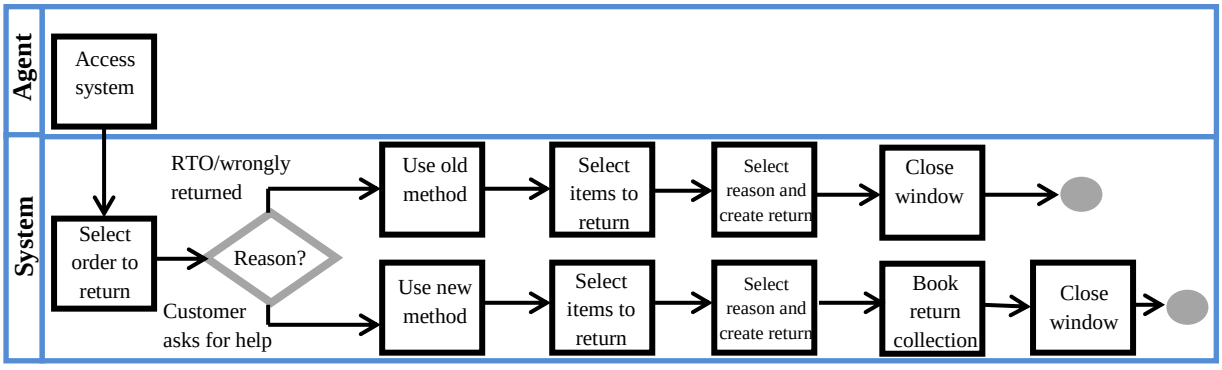
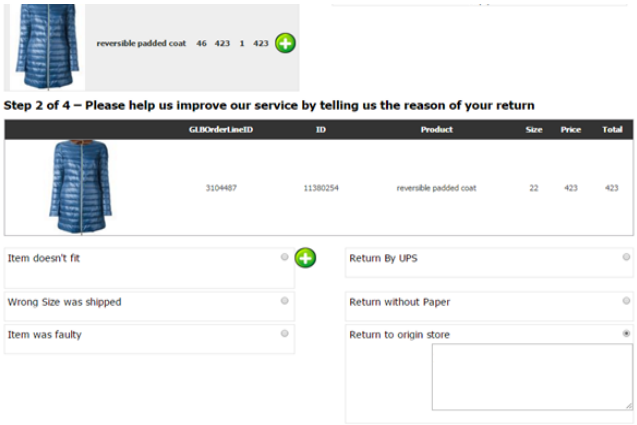


Figure 24 – Creating a Return Process Map

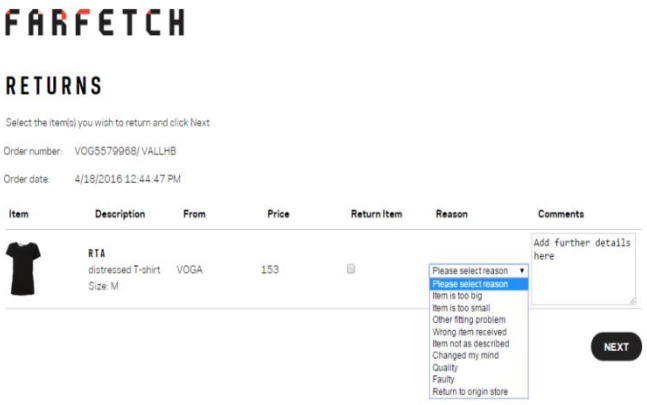
Looking at the process it can be seen that there are two ways to create a return, an older method and a newer one (this last one was created because it allows agents to book a collection in order for the carrier to pick up the package on customer's address). Depending on the reason the agent uses one or the other. When customer asks for help, the agent (from CS) uses the new method as it allows booking a collectionon customer's address. When a customer returns an item by its own means (without using Farfetch's website to do it) or a RTO takes place, the agent (from Delivery or CS BO) uses the old method as it doesn't book a collection which isn't needed because in these cases the return is already in the store or on its way.



- Doesn't allow to specify the reason of the RTO;
- Even though it's being used only to RTO's and wrongly returns, it has other reasons that shouldn't exist;

Figure 25 – Creating a Return – Older Method

Figure 25 represents a print-screen of the older method for creating a return on the system, that its currently only being used by the delivery team and by CS BO for situations that involve either a RTO or when a customer returns an order without using Farfetch's system. As it was mentioned, there are problems that make this process neither intuitive nor efficient.



- Even though it's only being used by CS FO upon customer requests it has the option of RTO;

Figure 26 – Creating a Return – Newer Method

Figure 26 represents the newer method of creating a return that is also not well designed as it has extra options that are not needed by the current users (CS FO).

Both this methods show flaws of interface design and require reformulation. These problems build confusion for agents creating the returns, who many times end up

creating them in the wrong way. It also makes it hard for analysts to retrieve valid data regarding this matter.

To solve this problem, the most logical solution was to create a single method for creating a return on the system, that would allow agents to do it efficiently accordingly to the different processes involved as it can be seen on the decision tree infigure 23.This new method combines the both existing ones into a solution that is simple, intuitive and complete.

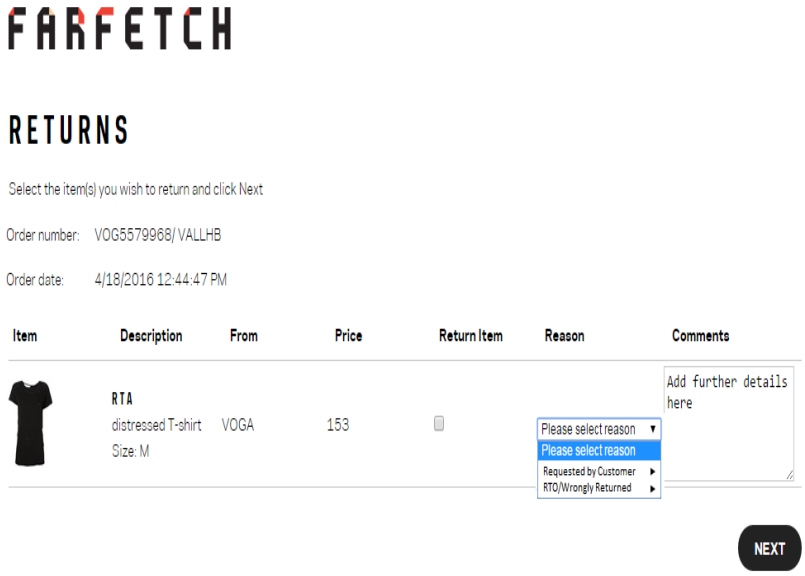


Figure 27 – Creating a Return – Solution

The new solution allows the agent to select the process that gave origin to the need of creating the return, and according to that it allows selecting different reasons. It also gives the option of booking a collection on customer's house or not, depending on the reason select previously. More print-screens regarding the new solution can be found on Appendix B.

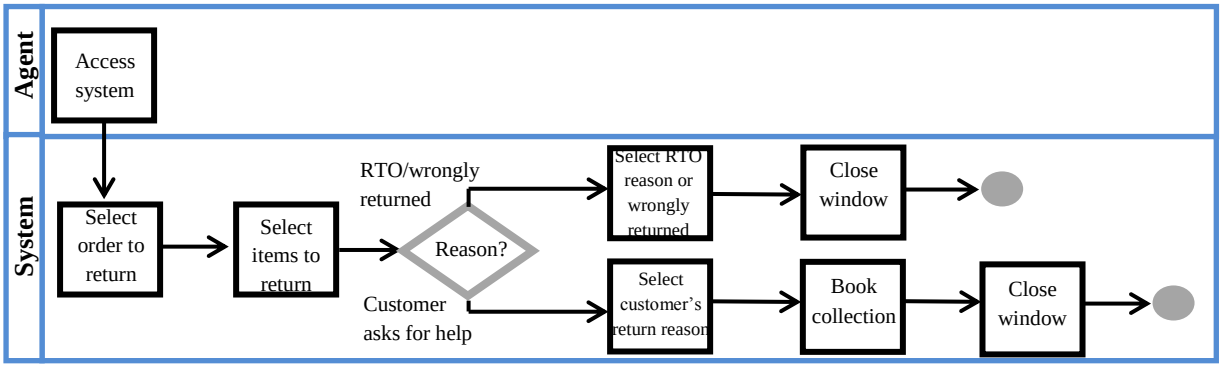


Figure 28 – Creating a Return Process Map TO-BE

The system will now allow agents from different teams to use the same method. One that was designed to be user friendly and to make it easy for agents to do it without mistakes. It also makes it more complete as it allows agents to select the RTOs' reasons, fact that is important for the Order support department to identify potential fraud suspects and also for analysts to retrieve valid data about this process with the goal of providing a better service to customers and to boutiques.

5 Results and conclusions

In the present chapter it is presented the results obtained with the introduction of both solutions. For each solution, specific KPI's were chosen in order to measure their performance, and according to those results, conclusions regarding the success of the project are explain.

5.1 Communication Improvement

The project's overall evaluation is extremely positive in all perspectives. As it was stated before, communication is an area that needed improvements with an urgent matter, as it lacked on a lot of basic background standards that opened possibilities for improvements with some relevance.

In fact, as shown on table 4, this project allowed improvements in all four indicators that were chosen to evaluate its success.

Table 4 – Communication Project – Final Results

KPI	Before Project	After Project	Variation
Average full resolution time (days)	6,0	5,2	**-15,1%**
Average handling time (min)	12,6	6,7	**-46,8%**
Average number of reopens	0,24	0,1	**-57,3%**
Average number of comments	4,0	3,7	**-9,6%**

What these values allow to conclude is that with a simple modification regarding communication and it's best practices, it was possible to make issue solving more efficient and assertive. Tickets are solved on average in 15,1% less time, and agents spend on average 46,8% less time handling the tickets. This means that the overall performance was increased with satisfactory values and that for the same volume of workload, the team's backlog will decrease as result of this improvement. Tickets' reopening number as decreased by 57,3% also followed by a decrease of 9,6% on the number of comments. These cutbacks represent an increment to communication and ticket quality. It means that tickets in general were solve with less number of interactions needed, and that once tickets were solved, they were open less times, meaning that the requester's satisfaction increased making it less necessary to reopen a ticket.

This success was possible due to the well-designed planning of the project, but also to the level of commitment that the delivery team showed on accepting the new procedures and methodology. In fact, by 15th of June, 45% of the communications inside the delivery team were being made with the use of macros and close to majority of the internal notes submitted after solving the ticket were transferred to the field "My note". This is a very satisfying value and it shows that the enrolment of the team on the project was high. Part of this success comes from the involvement of the agents on the developing of the solutions (specifically on the macros), allowing to motivate them and transmit the idea that even though the project

intended to change their working methods, it is with the idea of facilitating their work, and so their opinion on the project's shape matters and its incorporated on it.

Finally, we can conclude that while targeting the agents' performance, with the improvements that where made possible, the delivery team is now more prepared to face the high volume of work that is part of the daily routine of a central and crucial department. While it is not possible to compare levels of backlog before and after this project because different months have different volumes of workload, with the accomplished improvements, the team's backlog for the same volume of work should present better values than before.

5.2 RTO Reengineering and standardization

In order to evaluate the success of thereengineering and standardization of this process, the indicators chosen were three:

Average full resolution time→It will allow to measure the overall performance of the RTO that the introduced measures allowed to improve. The changes will make this time to be shorter.

Average handling time→It will allow to the impact standardizing and uploading the documentation to the tool add. This measure should make agents spend less time answering to RTO tickets.

Average number of reopening→ It will allow to measure the consistency and quality of the RTO tickets. The introduced changes will allow RTO tickers to be reopen less times.

Table 5 – RTO Project – Final Results

Row Labels	Average of handling Time (min)	Average nº of reopens	Average of Resolution time (hours)
April	11,72	0,36	165,36
May	13,04	0,33	116,8
June	7,58	0,18	48,60
% Variation (April to June)	-35,32%	-50%	-70,6%

As it can be seen on table 5, all targeted indicators had considerable values of improvements since the process's modifications were introduced. These values are naturally more significant in June due to the fact that agents needed time to get used to the new working methodology. Agents take now on average about 35% less time handling the ticket, which indicates that the process was made simpler and more intuitive. The average number of reopens was reduced by 50%, meaning that tickets were solved with a bigger satisfying rate , making it less necessary for other teams to ask for new interventions. The bigger improvement was verified on the full resolution time that, on average, is now about 70% lower than before this project was implemented. This is a very important result as it will allow to gradually lower the load of backlog existing in this category, that is one of the most problematic for the team as it was previously stated.

Another important aspect to be evaluated is the creation of manual returns on the system. What the modifications targeted was not only to make sure that these were properly created, but also that only three departments do them (accordingly to decision tree represented on figure 23).

Table 6 – Evolution of % of Created Returns

Department	March	April	May
CS BO	7,3%	4,2%	15,8%
Delivery team	44,3%	50,0%	54,9%
Order Support	48,5%	45,9%	29,3%

Table 6 represents the percentage of manual returns created by the different departments, involving either RTO's or situations that customers returned their orders without using Farfetch's system. After the modifications that were introduced to this sub-process, what wanted to be achieve is that the requests for the creation of these types of returns, stopped being sent to the Order support team. They should only be done by Delivery or CS BO, as it was explain on chapter 4.

As it can be observed on table 6, the modifications effects are noticeable, and the percentage of returns created by order support are decreasing. Before these changes were introduced, order support was responsible for about 49% of the created returns whereas in May, that number already represented about 29% of them. As other teams get more used to the new procedures, this number should continue to decrease until only the delivery team and CS BO are the only ones responsible for the creation of these returns.

The RTO process reengineering and standardization was successful in its targets and goals, and it showed that a problematic process can be improved by understanding where the main flaws are, and addressing those flaws with a lean thinking methodology that targets efficiency. It also showed that while talking about a complex process like this one, sometimes smaller changes regarding reengineering and standardization and more than enough to obtain satisfactory values of improvement. The fact that the changes that were implemented weren't drastic nor complicated, made it possible to do an easy change management in the team, so that the new workflow entered the teams routine without suffering too much inertia. This was crucial for the success of these measures.

6 Future Work

6.1 Developed projects

Even though the success of the implement projects was guaranteed, the work needs to continue being developed for both cases. Being part of the continuous improvement department, the work is of a continuous matter and so with time, the implement solutions will require modifications in order to potentiate their gains.

6.1.1 Communication improvement

Regarding the communication improvement, it is necessary to keep doing the follow up with the delivery teams for a longer period of time. Even though the 45% rate of communication being made using macros, the lower values of multi sharing as well as a good acceptance of the use of the "My note" field, preventing unnecessary reopening of tickers, this projects needs a longer accompaniment. The reason being this need is there are still new daily feedbacks given by the team every week, and Zendesk is also a tool that is constantly updating and therefore new features that can help make the project more complete might appear.

The worksheet to retrieve the team's feedback will continue to be available online with weekly check-ups to include the valid proposals on Zendesk, and this tool will continue to be closely followed in order to understand if it can provide new features that will allow communication efficiency and assertiveness.

6.1.2 Process Engineering

As it was stated before, the RTO process reengineering and standardization was a success, and other than the normal follow-up that these types of procedures require involving change management to guarantee that the impacts of the modifications are only positive and that no negative causes come from changing working methodologies, there is not much to do or add to it.

That being said, the lack of standardized and mapped processes in the company is a vivid reality and so what was done to the RTO process, should also be applied to many processes in order to obtain consistency and efficiency in all possible tasks. This is not an easy assignment as there is a large number of complex processes that the delivery team deals with on a daily basis. It is important to focus the work to be done into individual processes and address them orderly by how problematic they are. The same way this project targeted the RTO process for the reasons mentioned in chapter 3, there should be a study regarding the impact of each operation, to understand the ones that are in need of urgent study and modification.

6.2 Ticket Handling System

Regarding other types of projects, one that was talked about for having relevance while talking about the team's performance, is the development and implementation of a ticket handling system.

A ticket handling system would be a method that would allow the delivery team to address the different issues with different urgency. Since the team works by views that are related to categories, and naturally different categories have different levels of urgencies, it was understood that it would be important to define priorities among different categories, as well as specific SLA's for each category and sub-category (instead of a general SLA for every ticket)

To make this possible, what would have to be done is a combination of two things. First define priorities according to each tickets nature: Number of departments affected, number of resources required to solve the issue, what services does the issue affect, among others. Second, every category and sub category should be assigned with specific SLA's that fit the nature of the ticket. In the end what should be obtained is a logical guideline to handle tickets, that allows to treat tickets according to their priority, but also weighted by the SLA's defined, so that target metrics are fulfilled and even less important tickets don't get stuck in the pool every time a big flux of urgent tickets enters the team's system.

This is definitely a project that needs to be introduce if the goal is to improve the performance of the delivery team.

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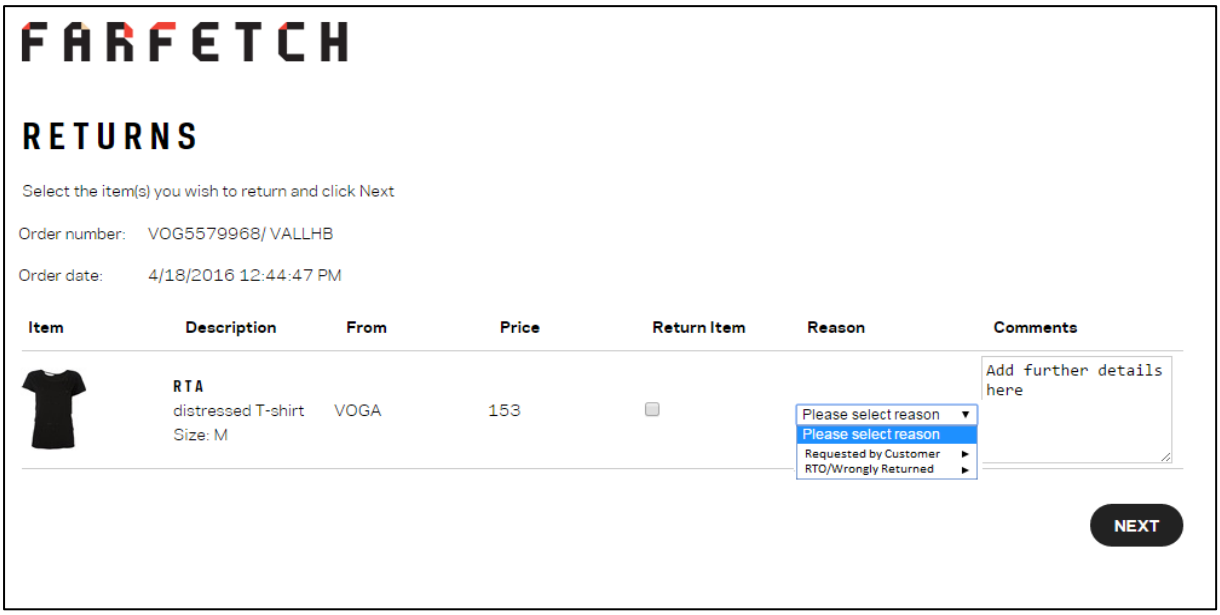
Appendix A: Delivery Macros

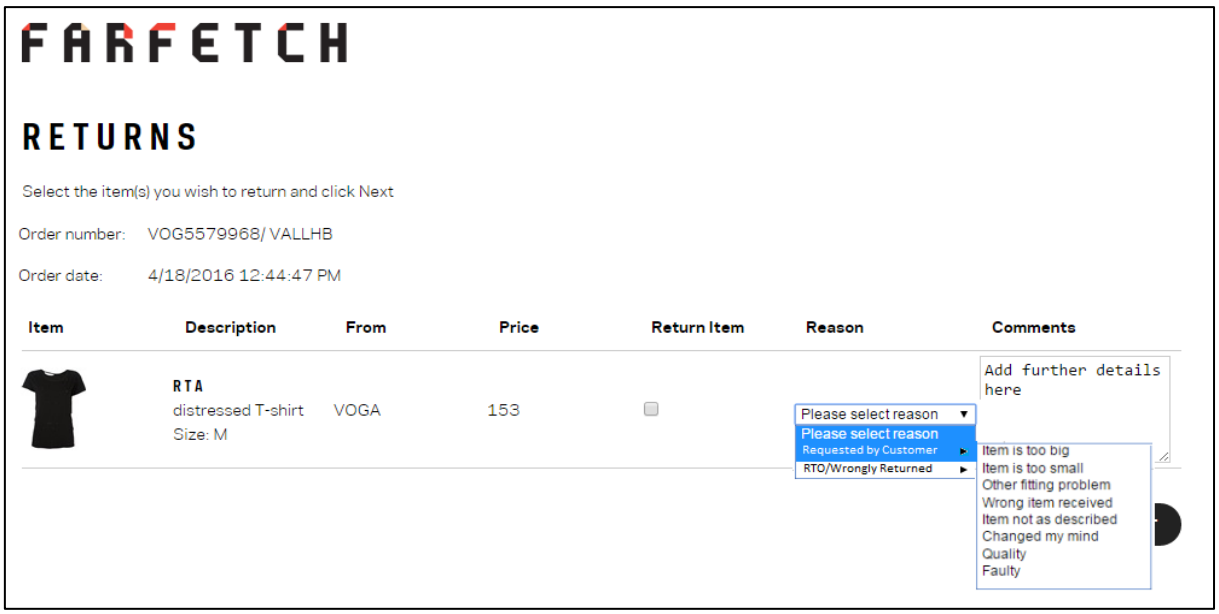
Delivery	Macro name	Used for
PS	Any update	Asking if there's an update regarding the issue
	Boutique Declaration Request	Requesting a stamped and signed declaration to boutique
	Boutique is unresponsive/Additional contacts needed	Requesting alternative contact method when Boutique is unresponsive,
	Hold for Update	Informing team that request was submited and to wait for update
	Lost and found (return)	Reporting to PS that a an order reported as lost was found, request to ask boutique if it accepts the return
	Manifest Report Request	Request Manifest Report
	No Connecting AWB yet	Inform PS that even though RTO was delivered to SameDay UK there is no connecting AWB yet
	Non receipt statement - Boutique	Requesting a non-receipt declaration to boutique to proceed with lost item claim
	Plastic Pockets request answer	Informing that plastic pockets where requested
	Return Created	Inform PS that manual return was created
	RTO has been requested	Inform PS that RTO has been requesting and to hold before confirmation
	Shipping documents (Invoice/AWB) request answer	Sending requested shipping documents to PS
	Swapped Return	Informing PS that there was a case of swapped returns and ask themt o check issue with boutiques
	Unknown Return	Informing PS about the ID of a return
CS	Any Update	Asking if there's an update regarding the issue
	Customer Unreachable	Asking for new contact details when customer is unresponsive
	Customer Refused Shipment	Informing CS that tracking states customer refused shipment and ask to contact customer
	Hold for update	Informing CS that request was submited and to wait for update
	JP Domestic	Informing CS about a jp domestic order
	Lost and found	Reporting to CS that an order reported as lost was found, request to ask customer if he accepts order
	Mexican Shoes	Ask CS to contact customer to ask about shoes import license
	Non-Receipt declaration request	Requesting a non-receipt declaration to customer to proceed with lost item claim
	Order Waiting for Collection	Inform CS that order is waiting for collection and ask them to contact Customer
	Order waiting for Payment of Duties	Inform CS that an order is on hold waiting for customer to pay duties
	Return created	Inform CS that manual return was created
	RTO has been requested	Inform CS that RTO has been requesting and to hold before confirmation
	Shipping documents (Invoice/AWB) request answer	Sending requested shipping documents to CS
	ssn request (orders >= 2500)	Requesting CS to ask customer for SSN for orders where its needed
	Unsuccessful Delivery	inform CS that carrier was unsuccessful to deliver package and ask to contact customer
	Wrongly Returned Order	Informing CS that customer has returned the item in the wrong way and to act accordingly
DHL	Accept claim	Accepting claim offer
	Any Update?	Asking if there's an update regarding the issue
	Address changes (++russia)	Requesting address changes for russian customer's
	Billing (ask for cost alocation)	Requesting cost allocation for invoices billed to boutiques
	Billing (ask for information about invoices)	Asking information about invoices billed to boutiques
	Claim Submission	Requesting carrier to proceed with claim
	Customs Hold/Clearence Event	Asking carrier about issues regarding customs
	Daily pick-up request	Requesting carrier for a daily pick-up to a boutique
	Damaged Item Claim (order)	Informing Carrier that package has arrived to customer damaged and request action
	Damaged Item Claim (return)	Informing Carrier that package has arrived to boutique damaged and request action
	EEI FORM	Requesting an EEI form
	Failed DDP	Informing DHL that courier is charging boutique or customer for duties and request them to solve the issue
	Failed Pick-up (return)	Informing DHL that pick up as failed on customers address and request a new one
	Lost Item Claim (order)	Asking carrier to search for package when it's suspected that it has been lost on the way to customer's address
	Lost Item Claim (return)	Asking carrier to search for package when it's suspected that it has been lost on the way to a boutique
	Manual Pick-up (order)	Booking a manual pick-up on customer's address
	Manual Pick-up (return)	Booking a manual pick-up for a boutique
	Order Already Picked-up	Informing DHL about a lack of scan on boutiques collection
	Plastic Pockets Request	Asking carrier to send plastic pockets to boutique
	Redirection request	Requesting a package redirection to carrier
	Request copy of return AWB	requesting a copy of a return AWB
	Return delivered to wrong address	inform DHL that a return was delivered to a wrong address even though the AWB is correct
	Return With charges	Informing DHL that boutique is being charged for duties and request to wait for instructions and not to charge.

Appendix A: Delivery Macros (Cont.)

	Returns Via UK - New Store	Requesting a new-store set-up for returns via UK
	RTO AWB request	Requesting an RTO AWB
	Rto involving charges	Informing that and RTO is being delivered with charges and request DDP delivery instead
	RTO Reason	Asking DHL about the reason for an RTO
	RTO Request	Requesting an RTO to carrier
	Sameday Uk team - Connecting AWB request	Requesting connecting AWB to SameDay UK team
	Send requested documentation	Sending requested documentation to carrier
	Tracking Status	Asking Carrier about lack of tracking update
UPS	Any Update?	Asking if there's an update regarding the issue
	Billing (ask for cost alocation)	Requesting cost allocation for invoices billed to boutiques
	billing (ask for information about invoices)	Asking information about invoices billed to boutiques
	Claim Submission	Requesting carrier to proceed with claim
	Daily pick-up request	Requesting carrier for a daily pick-up to a boutique
	Damaged Item Claim (order)	Informing Carrier that package has arrived to customer damaged and request action
	Damaged Item Claim (return)	Informing Carrier that package has arrived to boutique damaged and request action
	Lost Item Claim (order)	Asking carrier to search for package when it's suspected that it has been lost on the way to customer's address
	Lost Item Claim (return)	Asking carrier to search for package when it's suspected that it has been lost on the way to a boutique
	Manual Pick-up order	Booking a manual pick-up on customer's address
	New Store Set up	Requesting UPS to set-up a new store on their system
	Order Already Picked-up	Informing UPS about a lack of scan on boutiques collection
	Plastic Pockets Request	Asking carrier to send plastic pockets to boutique
	Redirection request	Requesting a package redirection to carrier
	RTO Request	Requesting an RTO to carrier
	Send requested documentation	Sending requested documentation to carrier
	Tracking Status	Asking Carrier about lack of tracking update
Sanara	Sanara request return	Asking Sanara for customer's export docs
	Sanara request	Asking Sanara for boutique's export docs
Boutique	FDA/DBT	Sending FDA and Drop Ball test to boutique
FEMA	Resposta pedido Adšo	Send Documentation to Adšo
	Slots - confirmaçšo agendamento	Confirm pick-up schedule to AM's
	Slots - Informar sobre pedido	Confirm pick-up Requets to AM's
	Slots - Pedido à FEMA	Request pick-up schedule to FEMA
TNT	Slots - Resposta AM's	Confirm TNT schedule to AM's
Editorials	AWB request answer	Send requested documentation to editorials
PreAlerts	Pre-Alerts	Send requested Pre-Alerts

ANEXO B: New system Solution for Creating a Manual Return





ANEXO B: New system Solution for Creating a Manual Return (Cont.)